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PREFACE

The Bulletin contains articles on traditions and cultures of South and South East Asia besides those on Tamil tradition and culture. Certain articles received from scholars could not be published in this issue for want of space. They will be published in the next issue. As in the previous issues, the authors were left free to use such diacritical marks as were adopted earlier in the Bulletins, in view of the separate systems of transliteration in Indian languages. The Institute is grateful to all scholars who have contributed articles, delivered lectures and led seminars on a variety of themes pertaining to traditional cultures which appear in this issue.

We are grateful to the Government of Tamil Nadu as well as the Government of India for the continuance of their financial assistance to the Institute and it activities.

The University of Madras continues to accommodate the Institute in its building, providing it with the concomitant amenities and bears the entire cost of the paper and printing of issues of the Bulletin. The Institute is grateful to the University for all the valuable help which enable it to continue to carry on its activities.

The Institute is thankful to the Heads and staff members of the Departments of thc University for their kind and hearty co-operation in the activities of the Institute.

We also thank our President, Prof. G. R. Damodaran, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Madras, who, as usual has continued to evince a great interest in the affairs of the Institute.

The Governing Body and the Executive Committee of the Institute have also given valuable assistance in running the Institute and deserve our thanks.

Madras,
4-7-1981.

K. K. PILLAY
Director.

CONTENTS

Page

Preface ... 1

ARTICLES

Bhagavad Gita ... 1

—by Prof. P. Thirugnanasambandhan

The Sati Cult in Tamil Nadu ... 59

—by Thiru M. Arunachalam

The Genesis and Growth of the Social Reform Movement in Kerala — 1857-1947 ... 105

—by Thiru T. P. Sankaran Kutty Nair

The Brahmanas and Brahmanism in Sangham Literature ... 131

—by Dr. T. V. Kuppuswamy

Ganaperumakkal ... 165

—by Thiru P. Arthanareeswaran

Research on Mortar-Mix Used in Pandya and Chola Period Temples ... 171

—by Thiru S. K. Padmanabhan

Veena Concert ... 173

REPORT OF SEMINAR ... 175

(Led by Thiru K. M. Venkataramiah)

BAGAVAT GĪTĀ

BY

Prof. P. THIRUGNANASAMBANDHAN

Triune of Work, Worship and Wisdom.

The Gītā is articulated by a profound seer who sees truth in its many sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality without limit of time or space, embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of human spirit, from the crude fetishism of the savage to the creative affirmations of the saint. Thus Dr. Radhakrishnan presents in his Introductory essay to the Bhagavad Gītā the all comprehensive nature, the catholicism of spirit that pervades the Gītā.........The different elements which, at the period of the composition of the Gītā, were competing with each other within the Hindu system, are brought together and integrated into a comprehensive synthesis, free and large, subtle and profound. The teacher refines and reconciles the different currents of thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the upanisad teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhāgavata theism and tender piety, the Sāṁkhya dualism and the Yōga meditation. He draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unity. He adopts the method not of denial but of penetration and shows that these different lines of thought converge towards the same end'. (The Bhagavad Gītā, Introductory Essay p. 13 – S. Radhakrishnan)

It is no wonder that varied system builders and expositors like Śankara and Rāmānuja, Madhva and Nimbārka each drew inspiration from the Gītā for formulating and sustaining their respective doctraines of a varied nature. It will not therefore be inappropriate for a Śaiva Siddhāntin to find in the Gītā strains of thought and turns of expression which find their parallels in the works of Tirumūlar, in the Śaiva hymns and 'philosophical

literature' in Tamil and the Āgama texts in Sanskrit, not to speak of Upanisads such as Śvetāśvatara, Muṇḍaka etc. which lend support to several of the doctrines of the school of Śaivism.

The Śaiva Siddhāntin holds that the Vēdas as well as Śivāgamas are authoritative source books for his system. Sadyojyoti says 'Sivāgamāś ca Vedāś ca nitya eva pramāṇatah', speaking about the Śivāgama the Makuṭāgama says 'Vēdasāram idam tantram'—'This Āgama is the essence of the Vēdas'. Śrī Umāpati Śivācārya, the last among the four Śaiva Santānācaryas who lived on the outskirts of Chidambaram in the fourteenth century was besides a great scholar in Tamil and Sanskrit. He echoes the same idea in his work 'Sivaprakāśam' thus 'Vedāntattoḷivāsm Śaivasiddhāntam.'

Meikaṇṭār, the author of Śivajñānabōdham gave shape to Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja did to Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita. Alluding to this philosophical work, it is said—'The Veda is the cow; the Śivāgama is it's milk, the hymns of the four Samayācāryas constitute the butter in the milk and the excellence of the work (Śivajñānabōdham) of Meikaṇṭār the sweet relish of the ghee obtained therefrom'.

Vaiṣṇavīya Tantrasāra refers to Bhagavad Gītā in a similar strain—

'Sarvopaniṣado gāraḥ, dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ'

Pārtho vatsaḥ, sudhīr bhoktā, dugdham gītāmrtam mahat.

'The Upanisads are the cows and the cowherd's son, Kṛṣṇa, is the milkman, Arjuna is the calf, the wise man is the drinker and the nectar-like Gītā is the excellent milk'.

Hopkins considers that the Gītā as handed down to us is a recast document attempting to reconcile so many points of view a medley of beliefs and in so doing exhibits phliosophical inconsistencies.

Douglas P. Hill however finds in the poem an attempt at reconciliation of beliefs. The Vēda and its dēvas, the Upaniṣads

with the Vēdantic theory of Brahman-Ātman, the conceptions of Puruṣa and Īśvara, Sāṁkhya knowledge and Yōga practice - none of these are neglected; liberation is won by work, by knowledge, by devotion - by all these three in due proportion; and over all these broods the grace of God that stirs and meets the love of man. The performance of cast -duty is taught (caste which is not to be understood as in the present day); religious privilege is extended beyond the male twice-born to śūdras and to women. With regard to the Metaphysics dealt with in the Gītā we may perhaps hold that Senart is not wide off the mark in saying, 'there is little of systemetic arrangement in it, but a pious syncretism, the zeal for which allows nothing to be lost. Little shrinking from inconsistencies it was anxious not to abandon any part of a treasure of speculation which even if they often hardly accorded with one another, were not felt as opposed and incompatible systems!

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan writing in his introductory essay on the Bhagavadgītā has rightly put his finger on the central theme of the Gītā in the following lines:-

'The Gītā insists on the unity of the life of spirit which cannot be resolved into philosophic wisdom, devoted love or strenuous action. Work, knowledge and devotion are complementary both when we seek the goal and after we attain it. We do not proceed on the same lines but that which we seek is the same. We may climb the mountain by different paths but the view from the summit is identical for all'. (p. 75).

Cp. Bahudhāpyāgamair bhinnāḥ panthānaḥ siddhihetavaḥ RV. 10. 26-Kāḷidāsa.

Bhakti or devotion to a personal God is an article of faith in Śaiva Siddhānta. 'Bhakti' is defined by Madhusūdhanasarasvatī in his work 'Bhakti Rasāyana' thus.

Drutasya bhagavad-dharmāt dhārāvāhikatām gaṭā Sarveśe manaso vrttiḥ bhaktir ityabhidhīyate' 'Devotion is the state of mind attuned to the Supreme God, the mind that becomes supple and flows like a continuous stream towards Him'.

Rūpagosvāmī in his 'Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu' defines bhakti as 'assiduous thought fixed on the Supreme God devoid of wordly desire and the like'. It is strange that while 'disgust' or 'jugupsā' is elevated to the status of 'Rasa' among the nine, 'rasas' spoken of by the Indian rhetoricians, 'Bhakti' which shaped the conduct and swayed the minds of millions of people down the ages has not been accorded the status of 'Rasa' but assigned a subordinate role as a transitory feeling or 'sañcāri bhāva'. Rūpagosvāmī has rightly recognised 'bhakti' as a rasa and deals elaborately with 64 forms of sādhana bhakti or secondary devotion and five aspects of sādhya bhakti or primary devotion, namely 'śānta' quiet, 'Prīta', affectionate, 'preyān' intensely affectionate, 'vatsala', fond, and 'madhura' sweet. Thus the 'Rati bhāva' of the Indian rhetoricism has been raised to the status of paripūrṇa rasa' by Rūpagosvāmī.

Nārada describes 'bhakti' as 'Paramaprēma' or intense love towards God which is of the nature of nectar in bringing to an end the painful contingencies of life and ultimately the cycle of births and deaths.

Śāṇḍilya describes 'bhakti' as the intense attachment to God 'Parāṇukṛtiḥ Īśvare'.

According to Śivapurāṇa, the highest state of devotion is realisation of God's presence in everything, the second is meditation and contemplation, the third is the worship of symbols which remind one of the Supreme God, fourth is the performance of ritual and pilgrimage to sacred places.

Bhāgavata refers to four types of 'bhakti' (1) Tāmasa, devotion to God motivated by violence, hypocrisy or malice (2) Rājasa induced by desire for fame, sensual enjoyment, acquisition of power etc. (3) Sāttvika that springs from a sense of duty that leads to the effacement of 'karma' and (4) Nirupādhika, the highest type of devotion which is unmotivated and directed towards the realisation of the Supreme God, The last is referred to as 'ahetukhyā vyavahitā yā bhaktiḥ Puruṣottame' (3. 29. 12) because when the devotion is purposeful it takes on a merce-

nary character like the desireful vēdic sacrificial ritual. The following prayer is addressed to Indra thus –

Indra śreṣthāni draviṇāni dhehi,
cittim dakṣaya subhagatvam asme;
Posam rayiṇām, ariṣṭim tanūnām,
svādmānam vācah sudinatvam ahnām (Rv. II-21-6)
'O Indra, bestow on us the best treasures,
The efficient mind and good fortune;
The increase of wealth, the health of bodies,
The sweetness of speech and the fairness of days'.

When devotion thus becomes mercenary or rājasa, one does not thereby acquire purification of the mind, and if the purification of mind is not complete, metaphysical excellence or the obtaining of release is to that extent prejudiced.

The Gītā has classified the devotees under four heads, the man in distress, the man who seeks knowledge, the man who desires to acquire wealth and the man of wisdom.

'Caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino' juna!
Ārto jijñāsuḥ arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha!!

'Among these four the man of wisdom who is ever associated with God with singleminded devotion excels over the others and such a man of wisdom is dearest to the Lord, who reciprocates that love' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself.

Teṣām jñānī nityajuktaḥ ekabhaktir viśiṣyate
Priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham aham, sa ca mama priyaḥ
(VII – 17)

Śrī Rāmānuja describes the last one as parā bhakti' which is in the nature of 'Svasvāmini atyarthapriyānubhavarūpā' an extremely delightful experience centred as his devotion is to his Lord alone to the exclusion of everything else in this wide world. He neither grieves over something that is lost or hankers after something to be got. He views every being with an equanimity of mind, his inner core remaining unaffected by any

event that takes place in and around him whether gay or grievous.

In the words of Śaṅkara, the devotee who is a jñānī, by constant meditation on the Supreme - meditation being a form of devotion - identifies himself with the supreme who dwells in every living creature and every atom of object.

A true devotee of God when he meditates on God realises the existence of everything in Him, when he sees His creation he sees in every one of them the God he adores. To a devotee God is something tangible, the only thing that is real; he feels, hears and sees Him and loves Him.

Such a God can be grasped by unswerving devotion. Gītā expresses this idea thus:-

> Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ Pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tve ananyayā.
> Yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idam tatam VIII 22.

This is the supreme person, O Pārtha, in whom all existences abide and by whom all this is pervaded, who can however be gained by unswerving devotion.

A true devotee who looks upon every creature as an abode of God nurtures neither hatred towards one nor fondness towards another. They love equally every one, whether as categorised by laymen, they are friend or foe, high or low. This ideal is clearly expressed in the two memorable lines of Paripāḍal

> பகைவர் இவர், இவர் நட்டோர் என்னும்
> பகையும் உண்டோ நின்மரபு அறிவோர்க்கே.

In the case of those who follow your precept, O God, is there any ill will arising from the dual concept of 'this one is my enemy and this one is my friend'. We have the illustrious example in recent history of Mahātmā Gāndhi who called himself a true Vaiṣṇava. He never entertained in his bosom the least illwill even for his worst enemy. On the contrary he loved him most and sympathised with him and prayed for him.

Where there is true devotion there is no place for any divisive force based on rank, wealth, age, sex, caste etc. Śrī Kṛṣṇa made this abundantly clear when he spoke decisively.

> Mām his Pārtha vyapāśritya ye pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ
> Striyaḥ vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te'pi yānti parāmi gatim
> IX. 32.

'Those who take refuge with me, O Pārtha, though of the womb of sin, women, Vaiśyas as well as śūdras, they also attain the highest goal'.

We see this illustrated in the hagiology of Saiva and Vaisṇava literature. There are men and women, young and old, outcastes and brahmins, tillers and monarchs, celebates and recluses, potters and cowherds of every hue and description who are united by the one bond of devotion to God. Chēramān Perumaḷ and Kulaśekhara, Thirunīlakaṇṭhayāzhppāṇar and Thiruppāṇāzhvār, Jñānasambandhar and Appar, Āṇḍāl and Kāraikkal ammaiyār, Thirunāḷaippōvār and Appūti Aḍikal, Thirunīlakaṇṭar and Ānāyar are a few celebrated names which suffice to illustrate the point.

Thoṇḍar aḍippodi Āḷvār expresses this idea categorically in the following verse.

> பழுதிலா ஒழுகலாற்றுப் பல சதுப்பேதிமார்கள்
> இழிகுலத்தவர்களேறும் எம்மடியார்களாகில்
> தொழுமினீர் கொடுமின் கொள்மின் என்றுநின்னொடுமொக்க
> வழிபட அருளினுய் போல் மதிள் திருவரங்கத்தானே.

Whatever caste or community to which one may belong there is nothing to prevent his attaining the highest goal of human endeavour viz. moksa. This is borne out from the account of Saiva saints given by *Sekhizhār* a bright star in the firmament of religious literature of India. The saints dealt with by him belong to a wide spectrum of varied hue like brahmin and harijan, king and cultivator, washerman and weaver, in short men and women, young and old of varied avocations. Everyone was able to rise to the greatest height of spiritual eminence by ardent and sincere devotion. Sekhizhār refers to saints like

Kaṇampullar and Kuṅkiliyakkalayar who never allowed their zest for worship and sacrifice to flag even when they were reduced to the state of utter penury and at the same time will do nothing that will compromise with their self respect. A spirit of sacrifice of one's belongings including the nearest and dearest ones like wife and children and even one's own life permeates the lives of devotees like Iyarpakai and Śiṛuttoṇḍar. They are not mere specks on the cosmic horizon to be whiffed out of existence by the storms and stressess of life but they stood like rocks and withstood the storm with their eyes fixed on the deal of service to God and fellowmen. They proved that when the 'I' and the 'mine' are sacrificed the 'I' becomes the 'He'. When the microcosm identifies itself with the Macrocosm, the 'aṇu' the jīva becomes the 'mahat' the Śiva. In the eyes of this hagiographer - statesman Sekhizhar, a devotee is one who has that equanimity of temperanment to consider sorrows and joys alike. In the words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa again they are the Sthitadhīyaḥ.

Balagangadhar Tilak says: 'The religion of the Gītā, which is a combination of spiritual knowledge, devotion and action, which is in all respects undauntable and comprehensive, and is further perfectly equable, does not maintain any distinction between clanes, castes, countries or any other distinction, but assures release to everyone in the same measure'.

There cannot be a better illustration than the devotion of saint Kaṇṇappar about which it has been truly said 'Kaṇṇappan oppatōr anbinmai kaṇṭīr' - 'We have not seen the like of the devotion of Kaṇṇappar'. It is no wonder that Ādi Śaṅkara was so drawn to this faith-ful-devotion of Saint Kaṇṇappar that he celeberated it in that memorable verse in Śivānandalaharī wherein the title bhaktāvatamsa'! 'Peer among the devotees' is conferred by him on the hunter devotee.

'Mārgāvartita-pādukā Paśupater angasya kūrcāyate
Gaṇḍūṣāmbu-niṣecanam Puraripō divyābhiṣakāyate
Kincitsbhaksita-mamsa-sesa-kabdlam navyopatiarayate
Bhaktaḥ kim na karotyaho vanacaro bhaktāvataṁsāyate

Śivānanadalaharī, 63

Saint Kaṇṇappar answers to the description of the 'Yuktatama' spoken of by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the verse—

'Mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate
'Sraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ. XII. 2.'

'Those who, with mind fixed on me, endowed with supreme faith ever harmonised, worship me, they, in my opinion, are best in yoga.'

It is stated in the conversation between the brahmin and the hunter (vyādha) in the vanaparva of Mahābhārata (206-214) that the latter explained to the brahmin how liberation can be obtained by performing one's duty without desire. A similar precept is given by Tulādhāra, a merchant to the brahmin ascetic Jājali in the Śānti parva (260–263).

It can be seen from these that God recognises only true devotion in a man of pure conscience irrespective of the profession followed by him or the caste to which he belongs by accident. This is true of the devotees in the south as well as the Bhagavatas in the north.

Saint Tukārām says in his Gāthā 'Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras and the caṇḍāḷas, all have the right as also children, women, men and even prostitutes.' (Gātha 2382.5)

Among the followers of Caitanya there were Hindus and Muslims, robbers and prostitutes.

There is an account in Periyapurāṇam of a saint belonging to Buddhist persuasion who became convinced of the soundness of Śaiva tenets continued to wear the buddhist robe and took a vow to hurl a piece of stone at the Śivaliṅga everyday before taking food. One day when he failed to observe this practice and proceeded to take his food he recollected at once his lapse, and hastened to the temple and hurled the stone. Lo, Lord Śiva who appreciated this peculiar form of worship on the part of this devotee was so pleased as if he was worshipped with flowers and appeared before him and granted liberation.

Sekkizhār was reminded in this context of the same saint Kaṇṇappar immortalised by Śaṅkara in his Śivānandalaharī an equally sincere devotee who too adopted what to the ordinary folk appeared blasphemy and extols this type of devotion of these two saints in the lines –

கல்லாலே எறிந்ததுவும் அன்பானபடி காணில்
வில்வேடர் செருப்படியுந் திருமுடியின் மேவிற்றல்.

The saints like Jñānasambandhar and Appar and a host of other saints portrayed by Sekkizhār answer to the description of a true devotee. The whole of Periyapurāṇam blazes for the glory of the devout nāyanmārs who exemplify the truth that loving surrender to the abiding will of God can accomplish what no amount of learning and reflection can achieve.

A word about the nature of devotees will not be out of place here.

Saint Sekkizhār, the great biographer of Tamil Śaiva saints gives a graphic picture of the devotees. The devotees when they meet their counterparts feel immensely happy, converse endearingly with them and in all humility stand close by them as a calf does the cow. These devotees of excellent traits never for a moment forget the pair of gracious feet of Naṭarāja in the Dancing hall in whatever state they are, whether they sit or stand, eat or sleep, open or close their eyes. These are the telling lines of Sekkizhār.

ஈசருக்கே அன்பாளர் யாவரையும் தாங்கண்டால்
கூசிமிகக்குதுகுதுத்துக் கொண்டாடி மனமகிழ்வுற்று
ஆசையினால் ஆவின்பின் கன்றணைந்தாற் போலணைந்து
பேசுவன் பணிந்தமொழி இனியனவே பேசுவார்.
நின்றாலும் இருந்தாலும் கிடந்தாலும் நடந்தாலும்
மென்றாலும் துயின்றாலும் விழித்தாலும் இமைத்தாலும்
மன்றாடும் மலர்ப்பாதம் ஒருகாலும் மறவாமை
குன்றாத உணர்வுடையார் தொண்டராங்குணமிக்கார்.

பத்தராய்ப் பணிவார் புராணம், பா. 1, 7.

Cp Saint Thirumūlar–

நின்றும் இருந்தும் கிடந்தும் நிமலனை
ஒன்றும் பொருள்கள் உரைப்பவராகிலும்
வென்றைம் புலனும் விரைந்து பிணக்கறுத்து
ஒன்றுயுணரும் ஒருவனுமாமே.

Speaking about the nature of bhaktas ; Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in a similar vein –

Maccittā madgataprāṇaḥ bodhayantaḥ parasparam !
Kathayantaśca mām nityam tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca X.9
'Their thoughts are fixed in me, their lives (are wholly) given upto me,
enlightening each other and ever conversing of me,
they are contented and rejoicing in me !

Matthew Arnold says, 'Religion is the foundation of morality. Love of God and love of the whole creation are the two cardinal doctrines of the two allied things, religion and morality'. The lives of St. Jñānasambandhar and Appar who appealed to the God at Tiruvīzhimizhalai and obtained monetary aid from Him to relieve the local populace of hunger and starvation are shining examples of what is called 'love of creation' by Matthew Arnold and 'maitrī and karuṇa' referred to by Bhagavān Śrī kṛṣṇa in describing the true devotee in the following verse –

'Adveṣtā sarvabūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca !
Nirmamo nirahankāraḥ samadukkha sukkha aṣamī XII, 13.

'He who has no ill will to any being, who is friendly and compassionate, free from egoism and attachment even-minded in pain and pleasure and patient'. Bhakti Yoga teaches them that God is 'Love' அன்பே சிவம். It teaches them that love itself is the highest recompense of love.

The emphasis of the Gītā is on the Supreme as the personal God who creates the perceptible world by His nature (Prakrti). He resides in the heart of every being (Kṛṣṇa is identified with the Supreme Lord, the one who lies behind the manifold universe, transcendent over all and immanent in all. The one

Supreme Lord is the beginning, the middle and the end, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra. 'Ekaiva mūrtir bibhide tridhā sā' says Kāḷidāsa.* The one Divine Personality is treated as these representing the three cosmic functions of evolution, sustenance and involution.

What is said about Kṛṣṇā can as well be applied to Nārāyaṇa or Śiva because all these are names representing the Supreme Lord. The Ṛg Vedic seer visualised the One Supreme God called by different names, such as Indra, Varuṇa, Māruti etc. and proclaims – 'Ekam sad viprā, bahudhā vadanti' Reality being one, the wise speak of Him variously'.

* ஆதிப்பிரானும் அணிமணி வண்ணனும்
ஆதிக்கமலத்து அலர்மிசையானும்
சோதிக்கில் மூன்றும் தொடர்ச்சியில் ஒன்றெனுர்
பேதித்துலகம் பிணங்குகின்ருர்களே. திருமந்திரம், 104

Śrī Kṛṣṇa identifying himself with the Supreme in the Vibhūti Yoga refers to his threefold cosmic action, 'aham ādiś ca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca, 'X–20 'I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of beings'. Akṣarāṇām akāro'smi (X–33)' Of letters I am the letter 'A' 'Na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtam carācaram' X–39– 'There is nothing moving or unmoving that can exist without me' and so on.

Speaking about the nature of Śiva, Umāpati Śiva in his Tiruvaruṭpayam says –

அகர உயிர் போல் அறிவாகி எங்கும்
நிகரில் இறை நிற்கும் நிறைந்து. V. 1.

In the same manner as the sound 'A' functions by itself and is also associated inseparably with all other sounds, the matchless Supreme God who is of the nature of Intelligence is omnipresent and enables the souls also to know, being in inseparable union with them.

In verse 4 of the same work the author refers to the threefold cosmic functions of Śiva –

ஆக்கி எவையும் அளித்து ஆசுடன் அடங்கப்
போக்கும் அவன் போகாப் புகல்.

'The Supreme Lord creates everything, sustains them and destroys them the Lord who is the refuge of all souls;

In the path of devotion an aspirant usually chooses one or other among the numerous manifestations as a pratīka for purpose of contemplation or fixing his mind on. It has been stated in the Vedānta sūtra (4-1-4) and in the Gītā itself that symbol is only a kind of means and that the symbol cannot be a substitute to the true all pervading Universal spirit, Gītācārya draws the attention of Arjuna to whom this cosmic form was revealed that he is beyond that form.

'Men of imperfect understanding think of the unmanifest, as having manifestation, not knowing My higher nature, changeless and supreme'

'Avyaktam vyaktim āpannam manyante mām abuddhayaḥ;
Param bhāvam ajānantaḥ mām avyayam anuttamam VII-24

Although the Upaniṣads too have prescribed the Sun, Ether and many other symbols perceptible or imperceptible for purpose of worship as aids or props to gain true insight into the nature of Brahman, the ultimate Reality is something beyond these symbols.

Madhusūdanasarasvatī has stated there are three ways of attaining the Godhead who is of the nature of Sat (Being) cit (Wisdom) and ānanda (Bliss). They are work, worship and wisdom, the three 'Ws' if one can call them. These are dealt with in the Vedas. Gītā too in the eighteen chapters embodies these three modes of approach to that Supreme God head.

'Saccidānandarūpam tat pūrṇam viṣṇoḥ param padam,
Yat prāpyate samārabdha vedāḥ kāṇḍatrayātmikāḥ
Karmopāstiḥ tathā jñānam iti kāṇḍatrayām kramāt
Tadrūpā aṣṭādaśādhyāyair gītā kāṇḍa trayātmikā

It may however be noted in this connection that the path of jñāna, the yoga of pure knowledge is one where an attempt is

made to get into contact with the Immutable, infinites indefinable unmanifested Brahman far above all relations. It offers no hold to the mind or speech. 'Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha'. The jñānins no doubt reach ultimately the supreme with no name or form, 'Ōr nāmam ōr uruvam illān', by a path which is less direct and more arduous. The easier path shown to us in the Gītā, the path of 'bhakti' leads one more rapidly and naturally to the same goal of liberation. This brings about a swift and effectual unchaining from the bondage of birth and death. The jñānayogin imposes on himself a painful struggle in restraining the action of the mind and senses and curbs his instincts. The Bhakta on the other hand turns his knowledge, will, feeling and instinct Godwards and beholds a readily responding personal God in every object and person. Bhakti is however not divorced from knowledge. 'Through devotion he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in truth; then having known Me in truth he forthwith enters into Me' declares Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

'Bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaścāsmi tattvataḥ
Tato mām tattvato jñātva viśate tadanantaram XVIII.55.

The path of Niṣkāma karma is fraught with impediments. Man being a creature of mental, vital and physical Nature and the tendency of his senses being an outward flow, the frail man in spite of his repeated attempts at turning his instruments and inclinations Godward, relapses into and slides down to the level of lower material Nature. Śrī Kṛṣṇa suggests as an alternative path of 'Prapatti' which is yet another aspect of bhakti but which does not require the varied and particular modes of performance that are prescribed and streamlined in the bhakti-marga such as Śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam pādasevanam, arcanam, vandanam, dāsyam, and sakhyam.

Śravanam is listening to the glories of God. Parīkṣit adopted this method.

2. 'Kīrtanam' is praising the glory of God. Nāyanmārs and Āḻwārs, Mīrābai and Caitanya followed this path.

3. 'Smaraṇam' is constant reflection on his glory. Prahlāda is cited as an example.
4. Pādasevanam is service at the feet of the Lord. St. Thirunāvukkarasar can be cited as an example.
5. Arcanam is worship of God with mantras and offerings as done by devotees.
6. Vandanam is to make obeisance to God as several of the Nāyanmārs and Āḻvārs did.
7. Dāsyam is divine service as Hanumān did to Rāma.

'Ātmanivedanam' which is listed as the last mode of bhakti is the surrender of the whole self. This is advocated by Sri Kṛṣṇa in his famous caramasloka.

> Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja
> Aham tvā sarva-pāpebhyaḥ mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ
> XVIII. 66.
> 'Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter.
> Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils'

One should act shedding his egoism, as a conscious instrument of Divine purpose. The lower nature in man determined by his 'svabhāva' is governed by many standards and laws in accordance with the triple quality of intelligence, passion and stupor connected with his mental, vital and physical constituents. These lower dharmas pulling in different directions will not conduce to the harmonious and progressive spiritual evolution of man. Hence the aspirant for liberation is advised to surrender all 'dharmas' connected with his nature and adhere to the 'Universal dharma' of Divine will. If he makes an attempt in that direction the Divine grace will descend and take him on the sure path unerringly and swiftly. In the words of Aurobindo 'The free perfect working comes first by referring and finally by surrendering altogether the action and its origination to the Divine Master of our existence: for we feel it progressively taken up by a supreme Presence within us, the soul drawn into deep intimacy and close unity with an inner power and Godhead

and the work originated directly from the greater self, from the all-wise, infinite, universal force of an eternal being and not from the ignorance of the little personal ego. The action is chosen and shaped according to the nature, but entirely by the Divine will in the nature, and it is therefore free and perfect within, whatever its outward appearance; it comes stamped with the inward spiritual seal of the Infinite as the thing to be done, the movemement and the step of the movement decreed in the ways of the omniscient Master of action'. Commenting on this carmasloka Śri Rāmānuja observes 'Karmayoga-jñānayoga-bhakti-yoga rūpān sarvān dharmān paramaniśreyasa-sādhanabhūtān madārādhanatvena atimātraprītyā yathādhikāram kurvāṇah eva uktarītyā phala-karma-kartṛtvādi-parityāgena parityajya mām ekameva kartāram, ārādhyam, ?āpyam, upāyam ca anusandhatsva-eṣa eva sarvadhārmaṇām śāstriyaparityāgaḥ.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to renounce all thoughts about the fruit that flows from the action, being the doer of action itself while discharging his duties whether they pertain to jñāna or bhakti or karma, solely keeping in view that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead who is everything the doer (Kartā) the God to be worshipped (ārādhya) the goal (upeya) and the means (upāya).

'Prapatti' is resorted to by a devotee when he finds himself in a mood of helplessness and despair against the odds of Prakṛti in liberating himself from the accumulated load of karma. Bhagavān rushes to help such devotees Prakrti or Māya belongs to Mahēśvara who is therefore called Māyī. Māyā being under the control of Mahēśvara, it is powerless once a bhakta becomes a 'Prapanna' and surrenders his whole being to Him cp. Māyām tu prakṛtim vidyāt, Māyinam tu Maheśvaram.' (Śvetāśvatara Up.).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa too assures Arjuna-'This divine māyā of Mine, consisting of the modes is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me alone cross beyond it'.

> **Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā!**
> **mām eva ye prapdyante māyām etām taranti te!!**

In Āṇḍāḷ we find such a devout soul who totally surrenders herself to God and resolves to serve Him for ever and anon and pleads with Him to transmute her natural instincts, feelings and will into divine ones.

> எற்றைக்கும் ஏழேழ்பிறவிக்கும் உன்றன்னோடு
> உற்றோமே யாவோம் உனக்கே நாம் ஆட்செய்வோம்
> மற்றை நம் காமங்கள் மாற்றேலோர் எம்பாவாய்.

Saint Māṇikkavācakar also follows at a stage the 'prapatti marga' or the path of total self surrender. This is evident in the passage –

> அன்றே என்றன் ஆவியும் உடலும் உடைமை எல்லாமும்
> குன்றே அனையாய் என்னை ஆட்கொண்டபோதே கொண்டிலையோ
> நன்றே செய்வாய் பிழைசெய்வாய் நானோ இதற்கு நாயகமே.
>
> குழைத்த பத்து, 7

O Lord, Lofty as mountain, Did you not take over, even on the very day you graciously took me as your servant, my life, my body and all my possessions. Whatever henceforth is supposedly done by me whether right or wrong is yours. Am I responsible for them (No, only you are responsible)

Yāmunācarya in his Stotraratnam offers himself to God in all humility. He says –

'I do not faithfully observe the dharmas nor am I possessed of self-knowledge. I am not a devotee; I am not a person of any consequence. I have no other refuge. O Redeemer, I seek refuge at your lotus like feet'.

> Na dharmaniṣṭho'smi na cātmavedī
> No bhaktimān tvaccaraṇāravinde
> Akiñcano' nanyagatiḥ 'Śaraṇya,
> Tvatpādamūlam śaraṇam prapadye (V. 21)

The story of Vibhīṣaṇa saraṇāgati is an episode too well known to be recounted. When Vibhiṣaṇa quits the camp of Rāvaṇa, flees from Lankā and seeks refuge at the feet of Rāma, the latter true to his self declared his resolve in offering him

protection in spite of mild protestations from others. He declared decisively –

'Sakṛdeva prapannāya tatvāsmiti ca yācate
Abhayam sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmy etad vratam mama.

Tukkārām is yet another Godly soul who resorts to Prapatti. He pleads with God – 'I cannot steady my mind. I cannot stay my inward senses. I have exhausted effort. Peace and rest are far from me. I have laid my life at Thy feet. Do now as Thou wilt. I can only look to Thee. O God, I trust in Thee. I cling firmly to Thy feet'.

Śivajñānasiddhiyār gives expression to this act of Grace that is extended by Lord Siva to one who follows the path of knowledge and surrenders his whole self and dedicates all his action to His will. The Lord immediately thereafter lifts the burden off the shoulders of the prapanna, identifies Himself with the aspirant and takes upon himself full responsibilty for every act performed by him, thereby relieving him of the karmaphala.

சிவனும் இவன் செய்தியெலாம் என் செய்தி என்றும்
செய்ததெனக்கு இவனுக்குச் செய்ததென்றும்
பவமகல உடனாகி நின்றுகொள்வன், பரிவாற்
பாதகத்தைச் செய்திடினும் பணியாக்கிவிடுமே.

சிவஞானசித்தி சுபக். 304

The idea that Lord Siva reveals Himself to the spiritually ripe aspirant more clearly out of compassion is expressed also in Tiruvuntiyār.

அவன் இவனானது அவனருளால் அல்லது
இவன் அவனாகான் என்றுந்தீபற—40.

Mahadev Desai in his work 'The Gita according to Gandhi' states under ch. XII v. 19–

Fenelon would call 'bhakti', 'true simplicity'. Quoting Fenelon he says, "True simplicity is free and direct and gives itself up, without reserve and with a generous self-forgetfulness to the Father

of spirits. Experience alone can make us comprehend the enlargement of the heart it produces. We are then like a child in the arms of its parent; we wish nothing more, we fear nothing, we yield ourselves up to this pure attachment......We place all our interests, pleasure, reputation in His hands, receive all the sufferings that He may inflict as trials and tests of our love to Him. Some people who are sincere are not at ease with others and others are not at ease with them; but the truly simple man is at ease with others and others are at ease with him." The last line is so beautifully reminiscent of shl. 15 which states.

'He from whom the world does not shrink and who does not shrink from the world and who is free from joy and anger, fear and agitation, he too is dear to me.'

Yasmān modarjate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ
Harṣāmarṣabhayodvegair mukto yaḥ Sa ca me priyaḥ

XII. 15.

Bhagavān is himself the cause of creating the vast universe of beings. Prakṛti is the womb and in that He casts the seed and from it are born all beings. With reference to this world he becomes the cosmic soul. The Supreme is the seminal reason of the world of cit and acit. Through them He carries out His work. The God who is the cause of this world that causes delusion to the souls is also the emancipator of the souls. It has been said by Him

'The divine Māyā of mine, consisting of the modes viz. sattva, Rajas and tamas is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in me cross beyond it'

Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā
Mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te VII. 14.

Saint Tirumūlar gives expression to similar idea.

மேவிய பொய்க்கரி யாட்டும் வினையென
பாவிய பூதங்கொண்டாட்டிப் படைப்பாதி
பூவியல் கூட்டத்தாற் போதம் புரிந்தருள்
ஆவியை நாட்டும் அரனருளாமே—2344

The doctrine of Divine grace is a cardinal principle in several religions, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam etc. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares –

'Fixing thy thought on Me, thou shalt, by My grace, cross over all difficulties; but if from self-conceit, thou will not listen to Me, thou shall perish'.

Maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasādāt tariṣyasi
Atha cet tvam ahaṁkārān na śroṣyasi vinaṅkṣyasi
XVII. 58.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa reminds the aspirant of the importance of and possible harm of human will born of egoism standing alone. If it is not coupled with Divine will it wiil not only be nonproductive of any Good result but is bound to lead to disaster to himself and to society. Self conceit leads to annihilation of the self and disaster to community. One should therefore seek His grace subordinating his individual will to the will of God.

The Kathopaniṣad makes pointed reference to the need for Divine grace in the matter of self realisatioa. 'Yamevaisa vṛṇute tena labhya. Tasyaiṣa ātmā vṛṇute tanūm svām' II. 23 –

'Only to him whom He chooses, Brahman reveals His real form'

It is stated in the Quran 'Bounty and grace belong to Allah and He may bestow these upon any one He wills for He is all embracing, all knowing. He chooses for His favour whom He wills and His grace is boundless'

[– The Meaning of the Quran p. 124 by Syed Abul Ala Maududi].

This however does not imply any element of caprice or partiality on the part of God in conferring the summum bonum on the chosen few. The soul should also exert in the direction of Godliness and refrain from self centred activities that conduce to more and more bonds to the soul. God on His part is ever ready to help one and all impartially irrespective of the caste in which one is born.

'I am alike to all beings. None is hateful nor dear to Me. But those who worship Me with devotion they are in Me and I also in them.

Commenting on this Śrī Rāmānuja observes, 'madbhajanaikaprayojanā ye mām bhajante, te jātyādibhiḥ utkṛṣṭā apakṛṣṭā vā matsamana guṇavat yathāsukham mayyeva vartante: Ahamapi teṣu madutkṛṣṭeṣviva varte.'

'Those who are devoted to me with the sole object of reaching Me, whether they by birth belong to the higher or lower order all of them enjoy then co-presence in me sharing my qualities; in the same manner I also dwell in all of them as though they are superior to me.'

Śaṅkara commenting on the charge of partiality that the ignorant are prone to level against God in conferring His grace on the chosen few interprets Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement thus -

'I entertain neither hate nor love to any one. In the same manner as fire gives warmth to one shivering from cold if he comes near and not to one afar, so I bestow grace spontaneously on anyone who approaches me in a spirit of devotion and not on one who keeps himself away from me'.

Doctrine of Grace is the inner theme of the metaphysics and mysticism of Saiva Siddhanta too.

All cosmic functions sṛṣṭi, sthiti and samhāra, are but expressions of Divine grace. To take the last viz. samhāra or dissolution it can be seen that it is brought about to give rest to the soul that had toiled in a series of births and undergone a series of experience of karmaphala, the accumulated consequence of deeds in the period of prior existence.

The period of rest is followed by recreation or punasṣṛṣṭi when the evolutes of Māyā in the form of body, sense and other matter is brought into existence to facilitate the soul's experience of things that may cause 'ripeness' of its impurity. The period of sustenance or sthiti enables the soul in each birth

to enjoy and suffer in the midst of the products of matter which causes 'mala' to ripen so that divine grace may descend on the soul and hasten the soul's redemption.

Besides the above three, trodhāna or concealment is postulated as another cosmic function of God. Tirobhava which is coexistent with sustenance or sthiti is also an expression of grace in so far as the powers of the self viz the jñāna and kriyā śakti of soul are inhibited and concealed and the power of the bonds are stimulated into action with the result that 'malas' cease to be potent and liberation brought nearer.

These four cosmic function of God in the sense that they tend to curb and attenuate the powers of impurites or malas attached to it.

There is a fifth cosmic function called anugraha is Grace of a special order that is bestowed on the soul which removes the 'mala'. So the five fold acts of grace constitute the Divine Will that stands for abundant love and concern which God exhibits for the souls.

Abhinavagupta, a versatile scholar and Śaiva teacher is the author of the great commentary 'locana' on Dhvanyāloka, the outstanding work on Rhetorics and also works such as 'Tantraloka Īśvarapratyabhijñā vimarśinī etc. on Kashmir Śaivism. He is noted for his original commentary on Bhagavatgitā called 'Gītārthasaṅgraha'. He discusses in his commentary how to solve the problem of life in the light of the Gitā. The freedom from all our miseries, he declares, can neither be obtained through the renunciation of the world, nor by exhibiting hatred towards this imperfect world, but by feeling the presence of God who is the inmost core of each and every person and object'.

'Paramātmanah sarvagatam rūpam yo na paśyati tasya paramātma palāyitaḥ, svarūpaprakaṭīkārābhāvāt iti. Tathā krodhādirūṣitatvād eva lokān dviṣantaḥ māmeva dviṣanti:- 'aham Vāsudevo hi sarvāvāsaḥ' ityādi.

This is stated by Umāpatiśivam in the following lines in 'Śivaprakāśa.....

... ஒடுக்கம் இணைப்பொழித்தல், மற்றைத்,
தோற்றம் மல்பாகம் வாக், காத்தல் போகம்
துய்ப்பித்தல், திரோதாயி நிறுத்தலாகும்
போற்றலரும் அருள் அருளேயன்றி மற்றுப்
புகன்றவையும் அருளொழியப் புகலொண்ணுதே. I, 6.

Saint Māṇikkavācakar appeals to Lord Siva, the Light of all lights (செழுஞ்சுடர், jyotiṣām jyotiḥ) that dispels the darkness of ignorance from the minds of mortals, who wears the crescent moon that stands for his soothing grace and implores: 'O God, out of your abundant grace you voluntarily take me in your hands and conjoin you iccha, jñāna and kriyāśaktis with those of this humble self with a view to divinise my powers, but I this despicable self, under the spell of delusion move about and have my being in the midst of Prakṛti māyā, things of the world that entice men; please don't abandon me.

வளர்கின்ற நின் கருணைக் கையில் வாங்கவும் நீங்கி இப்பால்
மிளிர்கின்ற என்னை விடுதிகண்டாய், வெண்மதிக்
கொழுந்தொன்று
ஒளிர்கின்ற நீண்முடி உத்தரகோசமங்கைக் கரசே
தெளிகின்ற பொன்னும் மின்னும் அன்ன தோற்றச்செழுஞ்சுடரே
—திருவாசகம், நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம், 4

Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad refers to the importance of grace without which it is not possible to gain that insight into the glory of God who is smaller than the atom and greater than the vast 'mahat'. That God dwells in the inner core of every individual soul and object. A man free from mental affection such as sorrow caused by things earthly alone can perceive Him truly and that too only with His grace.

'Anor aṇīyān mahato mahīyān
Ātmā guhāyām nihito: syajantoḥ
Tam ahratum paśyati Vitaśokaḥ
Dhātuḥ prasādāt mahimānam Īśam. III. 20

It may be noted that Bhagavan gave Arjuna divyacaksus or supernatural eye without which he could not behold His divine power, the yoga of jnana, aisvarya etc when He assumed visvarupa. Direct knowledge of spiritual realities that Arjuna got on this occasion was made possible only by the grace of Lord Krsna. This is what Thirumāḷikai Tevar calls 'உணர்வுசூழ் கடந்த தோர் உணர்வு' an insight into Divine truth brought about by an awareness that far transcends the sense perception which is totally inadequate to have such divine vision.

St. Thirunāvukkarasar refers to a similar act of grace extended to Arjuna on another occasion by Lord Siva when, pleased with the penance of Arjuna, He granted him a vision of His divine form besides giving away the pāśupatāstra.

'பார்த்தனுக்கருள் செய்த சிற்றம்பலக் கூத்தனைக்
கொடியேன் மறந்துய்வனோ—(திருக்குறுந்தொகை)

The Gitā, as a piece of literature, is naturally concerned with the needs of the time in which it was composed. It followed a period when one section of people performed action such as sacrifices with a view to obtain some immediate gain in this world or happiness in heaven. Another section of people following the path of jnāna, considered work as something binding on the soul contributing to the extension of the cycle of births and deaths and consequently cut themselves off from works of any sort and adopted the path of penance and renunciation (tapas and sanyāsa). Bhagavān Srī Kṛṣṇa stepped in at this juncture and gave the integral teaching of work and wisdom. He sought to remove the dichotomy between the two and dovetailed the one with the other. He taught that the 'binding' quality of action lies, not in the mere performance of a deed but in the motive and desire, that prompt it. The gradual abandonment of motive and desire he held, conduces to the destruction of that element in action which is said to cause the cycle of births and deaths. Thus he gave a fresh interpretation of the word 'sanyasa' and 'tyāga' which do not mean to shun active life and run away from it but to be ever associated with work with this difference that it should be done

in a disinterested manner. The Gita thus provided the necessary corrective for the maladjustment. Śrī Kṛṣṇa decries people doing work with the sole intent and purpose of winning some reward or gaining some personal advantage here and now. If such be the motive no social good can be achieved nor even any advancement of the self in the path of spiritual progress. To desist from action is to act against Nature. 'Na hikascit kṣaṇamapi jātutiṣthati akarmakṛt'. 'No one does ever stay actionless even for a moment'. So one has got to do some act or another whether he wills or not why and how is that to be done? The answer is given by Śri Kṛṣṇa in more than one place to the query of Arjuna.

'Lokasangraham evāpi sampaśyan Kartum arhasi' III-20

'you should do your work with a view to the maintenance of the world'.

We are aware how stoppage of work in modern days throws social life into confusion and distress. So Kṛṣṇa emphasises the social obligation of every member of society to perform the work that falls to his lot or that is of his own choice in conformity with his svabhāva. He not only preaches to others through Arjuna to perform the work but himself sets an example as a leader of men, Puruṣottama, how to do it as leaders like Janaka, the great jñānis themselves had done before him. He pictures what calamity would befall the society if he, as leader, does not show the way and act. 'If I should cease to work, these worlds would fall in ruin and I should be the creater of disordered life and destroy these people', said He. cp. St. Thomas 'As the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; hence if He took away His action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing" Summa Theol. IX 20.

When people talk of tyāga, or renunciation what they mean is physical renunciation of the world whereas Gita means by it the opposite, namely to live in the world and act, not to run away to the forest or hill top and ostracise the senses. The

real 'tyāga' is action with renunciation of desire and that is the real 'saṃyāsa'

'Kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsam sannyāsam kavayo viduḥ
XVIII-2.

'The wise understand by 'renunciation' the giving up of works prompted by desire. It may be noted that the Upaniṣads advocate cessation of action as the means for the attainment of immortality'.

cp. ne karmaṇā, na, prajayā, dhanena
tyāgenaikena amṛtatvam ānaśuḥ' Taitt, Araṇyaka
X 10. 3.

'It is not by action, ... but only by renunciation that immortality is obtained. But Gītā disputes that ideal and holds that 'action' is not incompatible with the pursuit of 'knowledge' that leads to immortality. All that is needed is to do a thing without selfish attainment or expectation of rewards, of any sense of ego or sense of possession.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa strikes a new path and gives to 'karmaphalatyāga' a place higher up than even jñāna in v. XII. 12 wherein he says 'Better indeed is knowledge than the practice of concentration; better than knowledge is meditation; better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruit of action; on renunciation follows immediately peace'.

Commenting on this Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, 'Devotion, meditation and concentration are more difficult than renunciation of the fruits of action, karmaphalatyāga. This latter destroys the sources of unrest and brings about an inner calm and peace which are the very foundations of spiritual life. The bhakti emphasis leads to the subordination of knowledge and meditation to the devout mind and consecration of all works to God'.

Every action implies the doer, the instrument and the work done. Every one in the world is endowed with buddhi of three kinds sāttvic, rājasic and tāmasic. Harmony and synthesis are the characteristics of a sāttvic mind, quiet temperament, content-

ment, an inner peace are found in a man of sattvic temperament. Any action done by him is marked by clear vision; it is done in the light of reason and understanding as something that ought to be done whatever may be the result to himself. In short it is action done without any sense of personal like or dislike or popular approbation or censure. There is no sense of ego in such act. It is an act dedicated to the will of the Supreme who guides him from within, what Mahatma Gandhi used to describe as 'the call of his inner conscience'.

A man of rājasic temperament has a notion of right and wrong but it is actuated by ego-centredness. The truth is distorted by the reason of the ego and the will of desire. His action is motivated by a sense of satisfaction of his own longings and desires. His vision and thinking are naturally distorted and the right values get blurred or lost. It is this which is the cause of falsehood and misconduct that we see around us that spoil the social good of the community at large.

A man of tāmasic temperament is ignorant and acts stupidly. His mind is confused and deluded, well pleased in its indolence and inertia and is marked by an aversion to mental change and progress. Such a person is slow to act, will give it up if it taxes his strength, will get depressed if he does not succeed. He ignores the values of things and men.

These three modes are found in all human beings in divergent degrees. This phyletic classification has a great bearing as the 'karma' or action that one performs. We all know how men are classified under the four heads 'the sanguine, the bilious, the lymphatic and the nervous' on the basis of their physiological 'humours'. These two types of classification can be seen to be related to the psycho-physical organism that a human being is.

Referring to these three strands of Prakrti or Nature of man Śrī Kṛṣṇa says-

'The three modes (guṇas) goodness (sattva), passion (rajas) and dullness (tamas) born of nature (Prakṛti) bind down in the body, O, Arjuna, the imperishable dweller in the body.' XIV, 5.

'Of these goodness being pure, causes illumination and health. It binds by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge XIV. 6. 'Passion is of the nature of attraction, springing from craving and attachment. It binds fast the embodied one by attachment to action. XIV. 7.

'But dullness is born of ignorance and deludes all embodied beings. It binds by developing the qualities of negligence, indolence and sleep.' XIV. 8.

One should cultivate the element of sattva or goodness in him and try to do things unmindful of the pleasure or pain that it may cause to himself, or success or failure in the very action performed, or attainment or nonattainment of the fruit thereof. This is the advice given to Arjuna when he stood bewildered before Śrī Kṛṣṇa as to what he should do, whether he should do his duty as kṣatriya or desist from the sinful act of killing in war. Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhorted Arjuna, to treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, and get ready for battle. Thus he shall not incur sin' II. 38.

He urges Arjuna to maintain the equanimity of temperament and do his duty unhesitatingly. The loss of a few material and ephemeral things will more than be compensated by everlasting gain for the soul and good for the wider community.

It was in this context that the following oft quoted verse occurs.

'Karmaṇyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana,
Mā karma phalahetur bhūr mā te sango' stv akarmaṇi'
II. 47.

'To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits let not the fruit of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa urges him to do his duty that is consecrated and selfless, dedicated to the God and leave its results to the indwelling Spirit who also manifests himself in the form of this myriad universe. The outcome of one's action is determined by

His will and therefore the good or evil, success or failure is turned by Him to the accomplishment of His cosmic purpose. The doer who thus acts is not affected by sin.

'He who works, having given up attachment, resigning his actions to God, is not touched by sin, even as a lotus leaf is untouched by water'.

Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ!
Lipyate na sa pāpena padma-pattram ivāmbhasā V. 10.

Thirumūlar referring to the conduct of 'antaṇar' says that there are some Vedantins who stop short of studying Vedanta but never abandon desire. Abandoning desire is the sine qua non of a Vedantin and hence men of wisdom must abandon desire.

வேதாந்தங் கேட்க விரும்பிய வேதியர்
வேதாந்தங் கேட்டும் தம் வேட்கை ஒழிந்திலர்
வேதாந்தமாவது வேட்கை ஒழிந்திடம்
வேதாந்தங் கேட்டவர் வேட்கை விட்டாரே

Tantram I, 12-6.

Action performed without desire does not leave behind any trace of its effect, good or evil in the doer because he is engaged in the task only as a duty to be performed as ordained by the will of God and as an offering to God. His position in the world is that of a giver and he never cares to receive anything and therefore he eludes the grasp of misery and pain which are the result of the reaction of attachment. He disconnects himself both from the objects of the world that distract him and establishes firm connection with God the inner Being. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says-'Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of works, ever content, without any kind of dependence, he does, nothing though he is ever engaged in work'.

Tyaktvā karma phalāsaṅgam nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ!
Karmaṇyabhipravṛttopi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ!!

Commenting on the last quarter 'naiva kiñcit karoti' Śrī Rāmānuja observes, 'Karmāpadeśena jñānābhyāsam eva karotit

under the pretext of doing an act he is only putting into practice the knowledge gained !

Once Vyāsa was standing on the bank of Yamuna to get across the river. Several gopis also were waiting there to go to the other bank. But there was no boat to carry them to the other side. Not knowing what to do the Gopis sought the advice of Vyāsa. Vyāsa said that he was hungry and asked the Gopis whether they had anything to eat. The Gopis gave him milk and curds. Vyāsa after eating them appealed to the river Goddess - 'O Yamunā devi, if it is true that I am fasting, please give us way to get to the other side'. The Gopis were amused at this strange appeal from a person who consumed milk and curds and claims to be fasting. Lo, there was a cleft in the steam and all of them walked the other side of Yamunā. Though for all outward appearance Vyāsa did the act of eating it was done as an offering to Vāsudeva in him who in fact partook of the act of eating. So his statement that he was fasting proved true as evidenced by the response to his prayer on the part of Yamuna nadī.

It is said very often by men of this age moulded by western thought that the Gītā opposes the ordinary ascetic and quietistic tendency of Indian thought and spirituality and proclaims the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, what goes by the name of social service in modern days.

Śrī Aurobindo says that it is a misreading of modern mind into an ancient book. 'That which the Gītā teaches is not a human but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature, not social service but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world, and as sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature' (p. 43)

Undoubtedly, the Gītā is a gospel of works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, in spiritual realisation and quietude,

and of works motivated by devotion, a conscious surrender of One's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind dictated by egoistic and altmistic by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles ideals.

Gitacarya urges man to work and work incessantly but not to be attached to it, because that is the only way of escaping the effects of work, the bondage of Good as well as the bondage of evil. Chain is a chain whether made of gold or iron. Every thought and deed leaves an impression on the mind if one is engrossed in it and is attached to it. One should work as a svatantra puruṣa, a master, not as a slave working for wages. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives this teaching. 'While you act don't be a slave to Prakrti or senses and objects of the world of senses. So long as we act in certain ways because we like them or desist from certain others because we dislike them, we will be bound by actions. For, every sense attachment and aversion are fixed in regard to the objects of that sense. Let no one come under their sway for they are his two waylayers'.

Indriyasendriyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,
Tayor na vaśam āgacchet tau hyasya paripanthinau III. 34.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is an ācārya in the true sense of the word. He is not only a preceptor but a practitioner. He declares how he is ever engaged in selfless work.

'There is not for me, O Pārtha, any work in the three worlds which has to be done nor anything to be obtained which has not been obtained; yet I am engaged in work.'

'Na me pārthā'sti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu himcana,
Nānavāptam avāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi III. 22.

He is in the words of Tiruvaḷḷuvar 'வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை யிலான்'. As a Puruṣottama he is conscious of his duty to act in the interest of the creatures as a father does his duty for the sake of his children without any thought of return,

The following verse in Srimad Bhagavatam invokes the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who as a jñāni with no Ego-consciousness, proceeds to act of his own free will without attachment. As a perfect Being he has none to gain. Yet he continues to pursue his act in the way chalked out by Himself, setting in motion the manifold dharmas.

'Tam īhamānam nirahanaṛtam budham
Nirāśiṣam pūrṇam anaya coditam!
Nṛn śikṣayantam nijavartma samsthitam
Prabhum prapadye akhiladharmabhāvanam'

One is thus exhorted to do his duty in a spirit of self sacrifice. There is a story of the mangoose in the Mahābhārata, that visited the spot where the Pañca pāṇdavas had just then concluded a great sacrifice in commemoration of their victory in the Bharata war. The mangoose whose body was half golden and half brown began to roll on the sacrificial ground. When asked the reason for its strange act it narrated the story of a poor brahmin who gave the little barley flour to a hungry guest who demanded the little food that he, his wife, his son and son-in-law, all of them starving were about to take. The mangoose said that when it rolled on the floor where a few granules of barley flour had fallen half of its body turned gold whereas no such transformation has taken place while rolling on the yajñasala of the Paṇdavas and as such this was no sacrifice in the real sense'.

So karmayoga is to do and die and not to ask the why and what for, as a work dedicated for lokasaṅgraha or Universal good. The true life of work is indeed as hard as, if not harder than the task of an ideal sanyāsin.

Swāmi Vivekānanda in one of his lectures says, 'Karmayoga teaches how to work, how to employ to the greatest advantage the largest part of our energies in the work that is before us. The Karma yogi works because it is his nature because he feels that it is good for him to do so, and he has no object beyond that. His position in this world is that of a giver and he never cares to receive anything'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasises this crucial teaching of His in the last chapter dispelling the misconception held in several quarters in his own time that all action lead to bondage.

'Acts of sacrifice, gift and penance are not to be relinquished but should be performed. For sacrifice gift and penance are purifiers of the aspirants'

Yajñadānatapaḥ karma na tyājyam kāryam eva tat,
Yajño, dānam, tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām XVIII. 5

Śrī Kṛṣṇa clinches the issue and continues his categorical statement leaving no room for vacillation in the minds of men typified by Arjuna.

'But even these works ought to be performed giving up attachment and desire for fruits. This, O Partha is my decided and final view'.

'Ętānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca,
Kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitamnnatam uttamam XVIII. 6

Reference is made to the jñānis, the seekers of Brahman in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣed which again makes it clear that there is no conflict between jñāna and karma. It is the Brahman whom the seekers of Brahman wish to know by the study of the Vēdas, and also by means of sacrifice, gift and austerities performed without attachment'

'Tam etam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā anāśakena, etam eva viditvā munir bhavati'.

பலவும் பயனுள்ளன பற்று மொழிந்தோம்...
நிலவும் பெருமானடி நித்தல் நினைந்தே—முதல் திருமுறை

Such was St. Jñānasambandha who helped his father to perform yajñā while he had no attachment to worldly things but was ever devoted to the feet of Śiva.

Those on the other hand who perform certain acts and pray to God and obtain as reward a place in heaven or the like enjoy those ephemeral fruits and at the end of it have to be

born again on earth and strive for the ultimate end. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives in ch. IX the other side of the picture, the man in the street who is ego centred.

Bhagavān says, 'Having enjoyed the spacious world of heaven, they return to the world of mortals when their merit is exhausted; thus conforming to the doctrine enjoined in the three vēdas and desirous of enjoyments, they obtain what is subject to birth and death.

Te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam
Kśīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti
Evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā
Gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante IX. 21

Umāpati Śivam refers to this transient status of souls in heaven and their return to earth, the only planet where souls can work out their destiny by following the appropriate path with the grace of Lord Śiva and be united with Him.

...கலாதிநிலை பரவிய சூக்குமமாம்
தன் உருவில் அணைந்து, பயன் அருந்தி அரன் அருளால்
தரையினிடை வருமென்று சாற்றும் நூலே.
—சிவப்பிரகாசம், 28.

Kenopaniṣad says, 'That which cannot be meditated on by the mind, but on the contrary the power of meditation of which includes the mind is the true Brahman'

yan manasā na manute, yenāhur mano matam Tad eva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yad idam upāsate I.5.8

Prior to the appearance of the Bhagavadgītā the Upaniṣads were teaching the efficacy of pure knowledge as the sole means of realisation of the Supreme Truth, the Brahman. Action of every kind was considered an obstacle on account of its being a bond, a hindrance to liberation. The author of the Gītā gave a new orientation, taught the integrated view of life where Jñana is recognised as the true gateway to the understanding of the Supreme viz-Kṛṣṇa himself without minimising the importance

and need for action, the right type of action that does not bind a person, the action that is performed without attachment.

'Na ki jnānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate IV.38
'Jñānam labdhvā parām śāntim acireṇādhi-gacehati
(IV. 39)

'There is nothing on earth equal in purity to wisdom. Having obtained wisdom he attains quickly the supreme peace'.

Saṅkara in his Brahmasūtrabhāṣya and Gītābhāṣya laid emphasis on knowledge, meditation and renunciation. It is commonly believed that Saṅkara as an exponent of Advaita taught only pure jñāna-yoga. His life is a testimony to his being a follower of the Path of knowledge, devotion and action in a spirit of renunciation, the path of triple strand advocated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. A great philosopher as he was, he recognised the need for religion, discussed about it, reformed it, travelled throughout the land, established mutts and sang devotional hymns in praise of several Gods and Goddesses taking of course all of them to represent the One Supreme spirit.

St. Jñānasambandha who preceded Śaṅkara, combined in himself Śivajñāna, piety and devotion and humanitarian action. He too travelled the then farflung land of Tamil aroused the religious conscience of people who were steeped in slumber for several centuries when alien religions ruled the minds of people, the minds that consequently became dry for lack of God consciousness. Stream of devotion poured forth thence in Tamilakam in the form of the sweet strains of Thēvāram hymns and Divya prabandhas. Intellectual stimulation, emotional satisfaction and purposeful action followed.

The Saiva Siddhānta like several of the Vēdanta schools accepted the importance of Jñāna as the immediate cause for liberation. 'Muttikku vittu Mutalvan tan jñāname' says St. Tirumūlar who is generally assigned to the 5th century A. D. According to Siddhantam, jñāna mārga is the sure way to get release from the cycle of births and deaths and get entry into the blisssful state of Sāyujya with Śiva. As Śivajñānasiddhiyār puts

it Jñānamiṭṭai atainta aṭaivar Nāthan tāḷe (8-24). People who are allowing in the darkness of ignorance can be redeemed only by the light of true knowledge which reveals to one the true relation between man and God on the one hand and man and matter on the other, man, being the centre of philosophical enquiry. Study of this triad of God, man and matter constitute the essential teaching of Śaivāgamas and Siddhānta sāstras.

Knowledge of the things of the world or pāśajñāna and knowledge about the individual self or pasujñāna are indeed aspects of knowledge. Physical and biological sciences and psychology and ethics do not provide one the true insight into the Highest Truth because the knowledge obtained by scientific instruments invented by the imperfect human beings with the help of their own instruments of knowledge the jñānendriyas is of very limited range. Ignorance and passion fleeting ; joy and creeping sorrow are the result and power cannot be otherwise. Māyā (Nature) causes delusion. If one were to map out the metaphysical truth it requires a different set of instruments and a different kind of approach. It is only by Siva karaṇa wherein faith and intitution śraddhā and jñāna come into play aided no doubt by reason and experience yukti and anubhava, that one is able to obtain Śivajñāna. This higher jñānaniṣṭhā is reached only by stages perhaps in ages after passing through the pāśajñāna and pasujñāna otherwise called aparajñāna ultimately one is led by His grace to paṛajñāna or Sivajñāna that culminates in Śivānubhava. This requires a reorientation of his thoughts and activities from without to within. The soul hitherto associated with the products of matter has to gradually extricate itself away from it and make efforts to associate itself with Godly practices and Godly men. This process is described by Saint Umāpati Śiva in his Śivaprakāsam (v. 84).

பாசமா ஞானத்தாலும் படர் பசுஞானத்தாலும்
ஈசனை உணரவொண்ணாது, இறையருள் ஞான கண்ணின்
தேசுறுமதனுன் முன்னைச் சிற்றறி வொழிந்து சேர்ந்து
நேசமோடுயர் பரத்து நிற்பது ஞானநிட்டை.

Aruḷnandideva in his Śivajñānasiddhi also refers to the aparajñāna which consists in a series of steps in the souls ascent of spiritual progress that precedes the

> 'parajñāna' the immediate cause of the final beatitude which is otherwise called reaching the feet of Śiva

> புறச்சமய நெறிநின்றும் அகச்சமயம் புக்கும்
> புகன்மிருதி வழியுழன்றும் புகலு மாச்சிரம
> அறத்துறைகள் அவையடைந்தும் அருந்தவங்கள் புரிந்தும்
> அருங்கலைகள் பல தெரிந்தும் ஆரணங்கள் படித்தும்
> சிறப்புடைய புராணங்கள் உணர்ந்தும் வேத—
> சிரப்பொருளை மிகத் தெளிந்துஞ் சென்றால், சைவத்
> திறத்தடைவர், இதிற் சரியை கிரியா யோகஞ்
> செலுத்திய பின் ஞானத்தாற் சிவனடியைச் சேர்வர்
>
> —சிவஞானசித்தியார் சுபக்கம், 8–11

> The Kāmikāgama puts it in a nutshell thus Śiva-prakāsakam jñānam Śivajñānam param smṛtam Vedādya-paravijñānam Paśupāśārthadarśānam.

The Śaivāgamas also indicate the primacy of jñāna and the subsidiary role played caryā, kriyā and yōga as an occassioning fulcrum for the dawn of jñāna.

Jñānotpattinimittam tu kriyācaryāḥ prakīrtitaḥ-Devikālottara Yogājjñānam samādāya jñānatattvam samācaret-Suprabheda.

The Upaniṣads also proclaim that jñāna leads to immortality. The Svetāśvatara says 'Jñātvā devam mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ' (V. B) 'a man escapes from all bonds after he has acquired the knowledge of the Parameśvara'. The Īśa upaniṣad declares, 'Vidyaya smṛtam aśnute'. 'By knowledge immortality is attained.' The Muṇḍakopaniṣad reads, 'kśīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare' when one has realised the Supreme Truth all his karma is destroyed'.

Gītā too extols jñāna no doubt in the line 'Sarvam jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyati IV. 36. 'Thou shall cross over all veil by the boat of wisdom alone'

But when we take an over all view of the Gītā we come to know that Lord kṛṣṇa does not take a narrow view about jñāna. He has made it clear that knowledge gives the true direction to action and action brings to knowledge its true fulfilment. This is in line with the view attributed to one Pañcaśikha in the conversation between Janaka and Sulabha recounted in the Mahābhārata.

Those who know the science of release have prescribed three different systems (1) acquiring 'jñāna' and abandoning all 'action', that is known by the experts in the science of release as jñānaniṣṭhā' (2) in the same way, other philosophers mention a 'karmaniṣṭhā'; but besides the pure 'jñānaniṣṭhā and pure karmaniṣṭhā the (3) third niṣṭhā or path (i.e. the path of performing action without attachment by means of knowledge) has been mentioned to me by the sage (Paneasikha)

This third system mentioned by Janaka is mentioned also in the Vedanta sūtras (3. 4. 35) Vide, yajnādini āśrama karmāṇi, ca bhavanti Vidyāsaha kāriṇi ca Saṅkara on 3.4. 35.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'Love of the world. the mask, must change into the Love of God, the Truth. Once the secret and inner Godhead is known and is embraced the whole being and the whole life will undergo a sovereign uplifting and a marvellous transmutation. In place of the ignorance of the lower Nature absorbed in its outward works and appearances, the eye will open to the vision of God everywhere, to the unity and universality of the spirit. The worlds sorrow and pain will disappear in the biiss of the All-blissful; our weakness and error and sin will be changed into the all embracing and all-transforming strength, truth and purity of the Eternal. To make the mind one with the divine consciousness, to make the whole of our emotional nature, one of love of God everywhere, to make all our works one sacrifice to the Lord of the worlds and all our worship and aspiration one adoration of him and self surrender to direct the whole self Godwards in an entire union is the way to rise out of a mundane into a divine existence'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa sets his face against narrow dogmatism and gives a message that has a universal appeal. He recognises that there are diverse ways that lead to the ultimate goal. There can never be one religion or one philosophy as there can never be only one type of man. Differences there were and will ever continue to be among the people as among the wider living creatures in regard to their powers natural or spiritual. What the Gītācārya stresses is the need to narrow down the barriers, to harmonise the differences and bring everyone under the Divine will so that misery can give place to bliss; turmoil and unrest will be replaced by perennial peace. He recognises several forms of approach, several paths easy or arduous that may lead sooner or later to the universal spiritual heaven of peace and bliss. Men of different temperaments and environment cannot in the nature of things follow the same path. So he declares—

> As men approach me so do I accept them. men on all sides (in all ways) follow my path' 'Ye yathā mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmyaham Mama vartmā 'nuvartante manuṣyāh partha sarvaśaḥ' IV. 11.

This verse brings in bold relief the universality of the teachings of Gītā. He tries to accommodate men of varied nature to follow different paths. One may perform sacrifice and seek certain ends of a material nature. Another may go to the temple and worship the idol enshrined there. Yet another may sit on hill top and meditate on the Supreme who is seated in his own self. The highway karma, bhakti and jñāna themselves have several innumerable byeways. Each one to some extent great or small helps to take the soul on the path of spiritual progress. To that extent it is welcome. Founding schools and hospitals, laying roads and building rest houses that satisfy the needs and aspirations of the public is a form of yajña that pleases God who dwells in every one of the living beings, the illiterate and sick, the humble and the poor, the young and old, in fact all the cross section of society.

Similarly a devotee who goes to the temple, sweeps the floor wreathes a garland or lights a lamp or one who sings the glory

of God in sweet strain or worships the image of God with mantras and flowers and other offerings. Every one is a pilgrim on the path of spiritual progress.

In the same way yet another who follows the path of upāśana and meditates on 'Oṁkāra' or an anthropomorphic form by following the path of yōga is equally a fellow traveller on the highway of spiritualism.

The jñānī who decries all rites and rituals and tries to reach the Supreme consciousness by study of śāstras by analysis of metaphysical concepts with the power of intellect also tries to reach the goal in his own way. Śri Kṛṣṇa is seen to commend the diverse paths in the following verses.

The Karmamārga is said to lead to perfection 'By worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty does man attain perfection in the form of reaching Bhagavān Srī Kṛṣṇa himself' 'Svakarmaṇā tam abhyareya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ'. XVIII. 46.

The marks which single out one who follows the bhaktimārga and the goal to which it leads is outlined by Bhagavan thus 'He who does work for me. he who looks upon Me as his goal, he who worships me, free from attachment, he who is free from enmity to all creatures, he goes to me.

Matkarmakṛt matparamahi madbhahtah saṅgavajitah
Nirvairaḥ sarvabhuteṣu yah sa mām eti pāṇḍava XI. 55.

The importance of jñāna in the emancipation of the soul bound by karma is stated by Bhagavan thus-Having gained wisdom he attains quickly the supreme peace'

jñānam labdhvā parām Sāntim acireṇa adhigacchati IV.39.

Aruḷnandi deva refers to the four paths namely Dasamārga, Satputramārga, Sakhamārga and Sanmārga which an aspirant may pursue leading to Sālokya, sāmipya, sārūpya and sāyujya respectively.

தாதமார்க்கஞ் சாற்றில் சங்கரன்றன் கோயிற்
நலமலகிட்டு இலகுதிரு மெழுக்குஞ் சார்த்திப்
போதுகளுங் கொய்து பூந்தார் மாலைகண்ணி
புனிதற்குப் பல சமைத்துப் புகழ்ந்து பாடித்
தீதில்திரு விளக்கிட்டுத் திருநந்த வனமுஞ்
செய்துதிரு வேடங்கண்டால் அடியேன் செய்வதி
யாதுபணியீர் என்றுபணிந்து அவர்தம் பணியும்
இயற்றுவதிச் சரியை செய்வோரீசனுலகிருப்பர். 19

புத்திரமார்க்கம் புகலிற் புதிய விரைப்போது
புகையொளி மஞ்சனம் அமுதுமுதல் கொண்டைந்து
சத்திசெய் தாசன மூர்த்தி மூர்த்திமானுஞ்
சோதியையும் பாவித்தா வாகித்துச் சுத்த
பத்தியினு லருச்சித்துப் பரவிப் போற்றிப்
பரிவினெடுமெரியில் வரு காரியமும் பண்ணல்
நித்தலுமிக் கிரியையினை இயற்று வோர்கள்
நிமலன்றன் அருகிருப்பர் நினையுங்காலே. 20

சகமார்க்கம் புலனெடுக்கித் தடுத்துவருளி யிரண்டும்
சலிப்பற்று முச்சதுர முதலா தாரங்கள்
அகமார்க்க மறிந்தவற்றி னரும்பொருள்க ளுணர்த்தங்
கணைந்துபோய் மேலேறி யலர்மதி மண்டலத்தின்
முகமார்க்க வமுதுடல முட்டத் தேக்கி
முழுச்சோதி நினைந்திருத்தன் முதலாக வினைகள்
உகமார்க்க வட்டாங்க யோகமுற்று
முழுத்தல்உழந்து அவர்சிவன்றன் உருவத்தைப்பெறுவர்.

சன்மார்க்கஞ் சகலகலை புராண வேத
சாத்திரங்கள் சமயங்கள் தாம் பலவுமுணர்ந்து
பன்மார்க்கப் பொருள்பலவுங் கீழாக மேலாம்
பதிபசுபாசந் தெரித்துப் பரசிவனைக் காட்டு
தன்மார்க்க ஞானத்தை நாடி ஞான
ஞேயமொடு ஞாதிருவு நாடா வண்ணம்
பின்மார்க்கச் சிவனுடனும் பெற்றி ஞானம்
பெருமையுடையோர் சிவனைப் பெறுவர் காணே. 22

In the words of Aurobindo, 'Whatever the system may be, it is not as the commentators strive to make it, framed or

intended to support any exclusive school of philosophical thought or to put forward predominantly the claims of any one form of Yoga (jñāna yoga or bhakti yoga or karma yoga). The language of the Gita, the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting of one angle of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience'.

It is not pure monism or māyāvāda nor is it qualified monism, nor is it Sāṅkhya nor is it Vaiṣṇava theism. Like the earlier spir tual synthesis of the Upaniṣads where karma, upāsanā and jñāna are spoken of here again in the Gītā we find a synthesis of approach at once spiritual and intellectual avoiding every rigid determination as would injure its universal comprehensiveness. 'The Gītā is not a weapon for dialectical warfare; it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme egion. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision'.

The Gītā harmonises the three great means Work, worship and wisdom through which one can establish communion with the Supreme Spirit. Lord Kṛṣṇa is at once the Parama Yōgī in whom all knowledge culminates; the Yajñapuruṣa to whom all works lead as well as Bhaktavatsala into whose being the devotees enter.

Gītā does not dogmatise. It assures freedom of worship to every individual according to his level and means and each one reaches the goal appropriate to his exertion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has no quarrel if one worships other deities so long as it is done with faith. He declares –

'Even those who are devotees of other gods, worship them with faith, they also sacrifice to Me alone, O Arjuna, though not according to the true law'.

'Worshippers of the gods go to the Gods, worshippers of the manes go to the manes, sacrificers of the spirits go to the spirits and those who sacrifice to Me come to Me'

Ye' py anyadevatābhaktāḥ yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ.
Te' pi mām eva kaunteya yajentyavidhipūrvakam IX. 23
Yānti devavratā clevam, pitṛn yānti pitṛratāḥ
Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājinopi mām IX. 25

Persons in different stages of development worship either Gods in heaven, spirits dwelling in the world of manes or amidst Natures objects or in the psychic world. They are all but limited forms of the Supreme capable of conferring only limited results and not the Supreme peace 'parā śānti' which is obtainable only by worshipping the Supreme Godhead.

A similar sentiment is found expressed in Śivajñānasiddhiyār Supakkam -

யாதொரு தெய்வங் கொண்டீர் அத்தெய்வமாகி யாங்கே
மாதொரு பாகனுர்தாம் வருவர் மற்று அத்தெய்வங்கள்
வேதனைப்படும் இறக்கும் பிறக்கும் மேல்வினையும் செய்யும்
ஆதலான் இவையிலாதான் அறிந்தருள் செய்வனன்றே.

Sutra 2. v. 25

This verse implies that worship of various deities was permitted in contemporary period as it is even to this day. From the point of view of metaphysical enquiry no single manifestation can be taken to be the absolute Truth, yet their validity and necessity from the standpoint of experience cannot be disputed.

As Elizabeth Waterhouse observes, 'All worship was to him sacred, since he believed that in its most degraded forms, among the most ignorant and foolish of worshippers, there has yet been some true seeking after the Divine and that between these and the most glorious ritual or the highest philosophic certainty there lies so small a space that we may believe the saints in paradise regard it with a smile'

Mahatma Gandhi has stated that the 'Gītā is the description not of war between cousins but between the two natures in us-

the Good and the Evil. I regard Duryodhana and his party as the baser impulses in man and Arjuna and his party as the higher impulses. The field of battle is our body. An eternal battle is going on between the two camps and the Poet seer vividly describes it. Kṛṣṇa is the dweller within, ever whispering to a pure heart.

Gandhiji was anticipated by Abhinavagupta of Kashmir of the 10th century who in his commentary on the Gītā called 'Gītārthasaṅgraha' refers to the unceasing battle going on for ever between right and wrong in one's own body, the dharmakseha, which is similar to the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas. Both sides try to secure the upper hand. The Gītā teaches how one should uphold the cause of the right and fight against the forces of wrong looking upon himself as but an instrument of Divine will to establish God's purpose on earth.

Kurūṇām–Karaṇānām yat kṣetram-samastadharmāṇām kṣayāt apavargaprātyā traṇabhūtam, tadadhikāri śarīram. Tasmin sthitvā ye māmakāḥ avidyāpuruṣocitāḥ, avidyāmayāḥ sankalpāḥ. Pāṇḍavāḥ - Śuddhavidyā puruṣocitāh vidyātmānaḥ. Te kim akurvata - Kaiḥ khalu ke jitāḥ iti yāvat.

Abhinavagupta would not restrict the right to freedom from bondage to any caste or section of people nor would he conceive of any limit to the Divine grace which in its wide sweep is all inclusive and universal. He observes in his commentary that the śūdras who are said to have no right for the perfōrmance of Vedic rites and are to serve the needs of others: they too according to Bhagavān, once they approach Him are eligible for the highest goal of liberation. For we have heard that Gajendra and others too were recipients of his grace and attained liberation'.

This democratisation of devotion, if one may call it so, is a feature that is noticed in several other schools of thought and religion. It is said that Lord Christ saw once collection of funds for charitable purposes in a church and seeing a poor widow making a contribution of two pice which she had in charity. Then he remarked 'Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow

hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury' (Mark 12.43 and 44).

Students of Tirumūlar may recall that well known verse which breathes the same spirit –

> யாவர்க்குமாம் இறைவர்க்கொரு பச்சிலை
> யாவர்க்குமாம் பசுவுக்கொரு வாயுறை
> யாவர்க்குமாம் உண்ணும்போதொரு கைப்பிடி
> யாவர்க்குமாம் பிறர்க்கின்னுரை தானே. (252)

Vyāsa exhorts in a similar strain people to give in charity each according to his capacity. 'A man who owns a thousand giving a hundred, a man who owns a hundred giving ten or someone according to his ability giving only a drink of water all these acts are of the same merit and equally beneficial'. (Ma. Bh. Aśva 90-97).

The sthitaprajña of the Gītā does not entertain any feeling of 'I' or 'mine' while doing his duties which naturally produce public good. The ideal put forth by the moral philosopher of the West on the other hand requires a man to do such acts which while producing public good also yield happiness of wordly life to the doer, because the aim of life is to live happily and to bring about happiness to one and all.

Metaphysics and morality are blended in the Gītā. One is asked to do his duty as an act dedicated to God, an act which is really an act of God, he being only an instrument, and an act so consciously performed will loosen the bonds of the world and leads him to the Divine goal. Rules of Ethics such as 'Satyam vada' or 'Thou shalt not steal' or 'Thou shalt not bear false witness' do not have that sanction when taught by the materialistic or the ādhibhautika school if one may call it. The same when linked to the cosmos and the spirit pending it, it gets a sanction which is more effective.

We find a kindred spirit who opts for the Gita way of life in the German philosopher Deussen a follower of Schopenhaver who says 'it is impossible to destroy unhappiness unless desire

is destroyed in as much as desire is the cause of wordly life and it is the duty of every one to destroy desire'.

The question whether a man of knowledge should also perform action in the same manner as a man of action is raised by Bhagavān in ch. III.

Śrī Kṛaṇa distinguishes two types of aspirants, one a man of deep spiritual contemplation and the other with an urge for action. He says

'In this world a twofold way of life has been taught of yore by Me, the path of knowledge for men of contemplation and that of works for men of action. Mahābhārata refers to these two paths as nivṛttimārga and pravṛtti mārga.

This appears to be a universal phenomenon since this problem is posed in the works of Aristotle also. In his book on 'Ethics' he expressed his opinion that true happiness consists in a jñānī spending his time in silent contemplation on philosophy instead of being tossed about in the ups and downs of political activity. Later he himself writes that both the paths are to a certain extent proper and yet it would be wrong to say that Non-action is better than action because happiness is nothing but action. Acquisition of true nobility consists to a considerable extent of 'action' founded in 'knowledge and the principles of Ethics. He appears to share the view expressed in the Gita 'Karma jyayo hyakarmanah'. Action is superior to non-action.

These two paths are designated as Sānkhya or Samyāsa and yoga or Karma yoga in the Gītā. We find a reference to the origin of this two fold path in Mahābhārata.

When Bhagavān directed Brahmā to create the world there arose seven mindborn sons Marica and others who adopted the path of action or pravṛttimarga, for carrying out the work of creation whereas his other seven mindborn sons headed by Kapila took up the path of contemplation or nivrttimarga. From this it is clear that both the paths are equally important and have

a role to play in the scheme of life. There is no question of high or low, no antithesis between the two. The one is not incompatible with the other. They are intended for two types of men. Bhagavān, the great reconciler that he was admirably puts forth the proposition apparently holding the scales even between the two but yet casting his option in favour of karmayoga

> Sanyāsaḥ karmayoga's ca nihśreyasa karau ubhau Tayos tu karmasamnyāsāt karmayogo visiṣyate V. 2.

'The renunciation of works and their unselfish performance lead to the souls salvation. But of the two, the unselfish performancc of works is better than their renunciation'. So long as a person is in the embodied state he cannot desist from doing action. All that he should do to avoid misery and pain is to divest himself of attachment to prapṛti and associate himself deeply with God. When that is done Śrī Kṛṣṇa assures mankind through Arjuna that he will rid them of all sins that accrue out of either performance of prohibited acts or non-performance of acts enjoined. He urges Arjuna not to be depressed by his inability to perform the acts enjoined to expiate the vast accumulated karmaphala but to surrender himself to Him heart and soul since Bhagavān is noted for his immense compassion, being a sure refuge for the entire world of creation, a Being of boundless love to those who seek his refuge.

Writing under the title 'Anāsaktiyoga' in the columns of 'Young India' in 1931, Mahātma Gāndhi states-'This is the unmistakable teaching of the Gītā He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. He, who being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action. Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. He who is ever brooding over result often loses nervc in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to

do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action never remaining faithful to any. He is ever distracted, he says good-bye to all scruples. Everything is right in his estimation and he therefere resorts to means fair and foul to attain his end'.

Western philosophers generally advocate the path of action which is supposed to secure the greatest good of the greatest number. That is the highest ideal upheld by them. In doing good to others they expect to find happiness. This is the ethical life that the western system has to offer.

The Gītā on the other hand advocates the path of action of a different type. One is called upon to act with absolute self-composure in an equable frame of mind. While doing an act whether one meets failure or success, suffering or joy one should not feel dejected by the former or elated by the latter. He should not allow his mind to be swayed by passion or hatred. As Gītācārya puts it Dukkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ Vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir ucyate. II. 56.

This teaching is unexceptionable and is applicable to anyone to whichever society east or west, whichever caste or community. Duty which has fallen on one's shoulders or which one undertakes on his own volition becomes a moral duty. To discard that duty or to take on the duty of someone else due to passion or anger or out of selfishness would unsettle things bringing in its wake harm to oneself and disaster to others. To illustrate, if the man on the street whose action is questioned by a policeman were to assume the role of the authority charged with the duty of maintaining law and order or if a man who is convicted by a magistrate were to assume the role of the upholder of justice and proceeds to dispense 'justice' according to his own concept of justice, social order will be endangered. It was in this context that Sri Krsna said 'Svadharme nidhanam seyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ'. 'Better is annihilation of oneself in fulfilling one's duty, for to follow another's is perilous' III. 35.

Man is not a more physical being governed by physical or chemical laws; he is not a mere animal governed by instinctive

reactions to the environment; he is not a mere thinking machine; he is a spark of divinity capable of rising to any height including divine perfection. If man were to progress he must have the freedom to fulfil his destiny. He must have the freedom to choose his path. Regimentation which curbs individual progress stifle his personality and he will be denied self-fulfilment.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa recognised the need for such freedom and hence after giving his teachings of a wide range leaves the option to him to follow the path after due deliberation.

He says, 'Thus has wisdom more secret than all secrets, been declared to thee by Me. Having reflected on it fully do as thou choosest'.

Iti te jñānam ākhyātam guhyād guhyataram mayā
Vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru – XIII. 63.

The apparent indifference of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is itself a lesson to mankind. No one however eminent a teacher he may be should thrust his views on others. He wanted his teachings to be pondered over to be reasoned out, tested by each individual according to his light and experience and capacity and then take unfaltering steps. This is in keeping with the Indian tradition of freedom and tolerance.

It is said elsewhere in Mahābhārata
'Tasmāt kaunteya viduṣā dharmādharma viniścaye
Buddhim āsthāya lokesmin vartitavyam kṛtātmanā
M.B. XIII, 141, 102.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar too says –

எப்பொருள் யார் யார் வாய்க் கேட்பினும் அப்பொருள்
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்பதறிவு.

Gita presents the ideal of a Sthitaprajña, a man of equable reason who is invested with the true knowledge of self. It is who can, with his knowledgeable action, contribute to the social welfare. He is the true Karmayōgi who even after acquiring supreme knowledge continues to work in a desireless manner for

lokasangraha or universal good. The Sanyāsa school is of the view that one must entirely abandon action in order to obtain liberation. This is remembered today it is, for more than anything else, in propounding the central teaching of 'niṣkāma karma' which alone is capable of establishing the Krta yuga on earth. It is indeed difficult of achievement to conduct oneself as a sthita prajña but on that score the importance of the Ethics of it cannot be minimised. One has to keep that ideal before him and strive his best. Even today everybody approves Gandhiji's teachings and speaks eloquently about them, though we frail mortals are not able to measure up to his standard. So Saint Rāmalinga said 'கடைவிரித்தேன் கொள்வாரில்லை'. So the teachings of great preceptors like Śri Kṛṣṇa, the Purusōttama have to be viewed as ideals worthwhile being attempted to be reached. This state of affairs, the dichotomy between the creeds and practice are there in every religion be it Hinduism or Christianity or Islam but the validity of the creeds cannot be dismissed on that account. This was the position ever in the days of Vyāsa. It has been stated in the Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata - It is difficult to find many persons who fully and completely follow the Bhāgavata doctrine which is 'activistic. 'If this world is filled with self knowing harmless jñānins, following the Ekānta doctrine, who continually tax themselves for general welfare all desire - prompted action will disappear from this world and the Kṛta yuga will come again'.

The English biologist Spencer has stated that the action of intellectual person who is supposed to be the most perfect is bound to be pure, beneficial and moral.

The Greek philosopher Plato says in his work 'that action which appears to be proper to the philosopher, must be beneficial or just; that ordinary persons must therefore look upon the decisions of philosophers as authoritative'. We have a proverb in Sanskrit, 'The path traversed by great men is the true path for us to follow'. 'Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāh'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a graphic picture of a Sthitaprajña in a few verses in the second chapter. He says -

8184

'When a man puts away all the desires of his mind, O Partha, and when his spirit is content in itself, then is he called stable in intelligence'

Prajahāsi yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān,
Ātmanyeva atmanā tuṣṭah sthitaprajñas tado cyate II. 55.

Such a jñānī dedicates all his actions to God, the God who is perceived by him to dwell in all His creation. So a reference is made to him again in the last adhyāya. Having become one with Brahman the Supreme, and being tranquil in spirit, he neither grieves nor desires. Regarding all beings alike he attains supreme devotion to me. We find here what Rāmānuja would call 'bhaktirūpāpama jñāna'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa admirably synthesises jñāna and bhakti, karma and jñāna and bhakti and karma in the whole of the Gītā. He has driven home the point that Devotion is one where knowledge and work play their part, and knowledge must find its complement in work and work is worship based on knowledge.

The man of dedicated action of stable intelligence, the Godly man the Sthitaprajña will have no stranger on earth, none inimical. 'He is free from enmity to all creatures, he goes to Me, O Pāṇḍava' says Bhagavān.

'Nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti Pāṇḍava' XI. 55.

A person of such universal love as Vaḷḷuvar or saint Rāmalinga or Gāndhi could never entertain the least ill will, much less enmity towards any creature under the Sun.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar said:

'இன்னு செய்தார்க்கும் இனியவே செய்யாக்கால்
என்ன பயத்ததோ சால்பு' —சான்றுண்மை (987)

St-Rāmalinga said:

எவ்வுயிர்த்திரளும் என்னுயிரெனவே எண்ணி நல்லின்புறச் செயவும்
அவ்வுயிர்களுக்கு வரும் இடையூற்றை அகற்றியே அச்ச நீக்கிடவும்
இச்சை காண் எந்தாய்—

Gāndhiji who showered love even on those who did him incalculable harm upheld Truth and abhorred violence. He said

once 'Truth excludes the use of violence, because man is not capable of knowing the Absolute Truth and therefore not competent to punish.'

When Vibhīṣaṇa was unwilling to attend to the obsequies of Rāvaṇa, Rāma, the embodiment of Dharma (Vigrahavān dharma) advised him thus :

'The enmity in the mind of Rāvaṇa has come to an end with his death. My duty of punishing evil doers has come to an end› he is my brother just as he was yours; therefore consecrate him into fire.'

Vālmiki expresses this idea thus—

maraṇāntāni vaṇaṇi nivṛttam naḥ prayojanam
Kriyatām asya samskāraḥ mamāpyeṣa yathā tava-
(Ram. 6.109.25)

Vyāsa exhorts in Mahābhārata-'Conquer the anger of others by peacefulness; conquer evildoers by saintliness; conquer the miser by gifts; conquer falsehood by truth'. As evidence of the Universality of the Gitā we can note the statement of St. John 'it is not possible that any sin is committed by those who have become the sons of the Lord'.

Śri Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to act like a sthitaprajña and tells him that he will not be guilty of the sin of having killed the elders. As a true kṣatriya he should fight as he is only an instrument in the hands of Providence. He is free from and untouched by all actions though he performs them.

(Karmaṇyabhipravṛttopi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ)

Materialistic philosophers raise the following objection. 'If one descends from the perfect state into ordinary society. one has to deal with many things with discrimination and modify Absolute Ethics. How can we say that Morality is immutable? In other words Ethics has to be consistent with the state of society at particular periods of time'.

No principle of Ethics based on the external effects like pleasure or pain can be permanent. So it has been said: 'Dharmo nityah. sukhaduhkhe tvanitye' - The rules of Ethics or pure behaviour are immutable and happiness and sorrow are transient'. Kant, the well known German philosopher has stated that 'One must consider only the Reason of the doer, rather than the external result of his action, in deciding on questions of Ethics'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa cautions Arjuna against being enslaved by desire and wrath which constitute the cause of sin. It is to be found in Nature the non-self. it is desire for what is pleasant and resentment when that is withheld. Both these are caused by the strand of energy, by the predominance of restless activity, the rajoguṇa.

Desire is singled out by Buddha as the arch enemy of human weal. Manu has described the insatiable nature of desire to which all human ills are traceable in the following lines-

'Na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śāmyati
Haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūyā evābhivardhate II.94.

Desire is never satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects of desire; it grows more and more as does the fire in which oblations are offered.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa draws pointed attention to the malefic effect of 'karma' or desire thus: 'Enveloped is wisdom, O Arjuna, by this insatiable fire of desire which is the constant foe of the wise'.

The great philosopher Spinoza cautions men against this evil in his work 'De Intellectus Emendations'.

'For the things which man, to judge by their actions, deem the Highest good are Riches, Fame or Sensual pleasure. Of these the last is followed by satiety and repentence, the other two are never satiated; the more we have, the more we want; while the love of fame compels us to order our lives by the opinions of others. But if a thing is not loved, no quarrels will arise concerning it; no sadness will be felt if it perishes, no envy if another has it, in short no disturbances of the mind. All these spring

from the love of that which passes away. But the love of a thing eternal and infinite fills the mind wholly with you, and is unmingled with sadness. Therefore it is greatly to be desired and to be sought with all our strength'.

Godly souls whose minds are 'filled with the eternal and infinite' as Spinosa would call them walked on earth. They shunned the earthly riches and longed for Divine grace. The author of Paripāḍal portrays the longing of one such spiritual soul in the lines-

யாமிரப்பவை பொன்னும் பொருளும் போகமும் அல்ல
நின்பால் அன்பும் அருளும்...

Thiruvaḷḷuvar declares that the most coveted wealth among the different kinds of wealth is the Divine grace.

அருட்செல்வம் செல்வத்துட் செல்வம். பொருட்செல்வம்
பூரியார் கண்ணும் உள—அருளுடைமை (241)

St. Māṇikkavācakar who was a minister under the Pāṇḍya king was weaned away from the material pomp and grandeur by the grace of Lord Śiva. St. Tirunāvukkarasar refers to the 'love of that which passes away and the love of thing eternal' of Spinosa, the 'Preyas' and 'sreyas' of Kathopaniṣad.

Early in life Thirunāvukkarasar was learned in the Jaina lore and was known as Dharmasēna. He became a convert to Śaiva faith after mastering the Śaiva texts and led the ascetic life scorning pomp and power and riches. His sole aim in life was to do service to God and men. Sekkizhār reveals Appar's equanimity of mind, his utter disregard for the earthly riches, the 'preyas' and deep yearning for divine grace the 'Sreyas' in these memorable lines-

புல்லோடும் கல்லோடும் பொன்னோடும் மணியோடும்
சொல்லோடும் வேறுபாடிலா நிலைமை துணிந்திருந்த
நல்லோர்முன் திருப்புகலூர் நாயகனர் திருவருளால்
வில்லோடு நுதல் மடவார் விசும் பூடு வந்திழிந்தார். 418.

—பெரியபுராணம், திருநாவுக்கரசர் புராணம்.

Appar answers to the jñāna described by Bhagavān 'The ascetic whose soul is satisfied with wisdom and knowledge, who is unchanging and master of his senses, to whom a clod, a stone and a piece of gold are the same, is said to be self controlled. 'jñānavijñānatrptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ yukta ityacyate yōgi samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ VI. 8.

'A sthitaprajña is without affection on any side; He does not rejoice or loathe as he obtains good or evil, his intelligence is firmly set in wisdom'.

'yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehaḥ tat-tat prāpya śubhāśubham
Nābhinandati na dveṣṭi na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā
II. 57

We may find a parallel in Islamic philosophy to this universal concept.

Attar quotes a saying of Ibrahim Adham. 'Three veils must be removed from before the pilgrim's heart ere the door of Happiness is opened to him. First, that, should the dominion of both worlds be offered to him as an eternal gift, he should not rejoice, since whosoever rejoices on account of any created thing is still covetous and the covetous man is debarred from the knowledge of God.

The second veil is this, that, should he possess the dominion of both worlds, and should it be taken away from him, he should not sorrow for his impoverishment, for this is the sign of wrath and he who is in wrath is tormented. The third is that he should not be beguiled by any praise or favour, for whosoever is beguiled is of mean spirit and such a one is veiled from the Truth: the pilgrim must be highminded" (Brown: A literary history of Persia Vol. I. P. 4.25.)

Another trait of the Karmayogin the sthitaprajña is outlined in the Gītā-

'He, O Arjuna, who sees with equality everything, in the image of his own self, whether in pleasure or in pain he is considered a perfect Yōgi'.

'Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yorjuna |
Sukhām vā yadi vā duhkham so yogī paramo mataḥ | VI, 32.

Śaṅkara commenting on this verse observes 'yathā mama sukham iṣṭam tathā sarvaprāṇinām sukham anukūlam, yadi va yacca dukham mama pratikūlam aniṣṭam yatha tathā sarvaprāninām duhkham aniṣṭam... na kasyacit pratikūlam ācarati'.

'He sees that whatever is pleasant to himself is pleasant to all creatures, and that whatever is painful to himself is painful to all beings'.

Vyāsa alludes to this idea thus in the Anuśāsana parva:

'One should not behave towards others in a way which one considers adverse or painful to oneself; this is the essence of all religion and morality, and all other activities are based on selfish interest'

Dhammapada, the Buddhist scripture in Pāli says in a similar vein ;

'That man, who for his own benefit, kills with a rod other persons, who also desires happiness for himself does not obtain any happiness after death.

Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni yo daṇḍena vihimsati
Attano sukhamesāno pecya so no labhate sukham (131)

Christians look upon this as a great virtue. Christ advises: 'And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise' (Mathew 7-12. Luke 6,31).

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'

(Mathew 22.39)

This attitude of mind is based on the awareness on the part of the Sthitaprajña of the presence of God everywhere and in everyone. When he becomes aware of this 'His self-harmonized by yōga sees the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the larger self of his; everywhere he sees the same.

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānam sarvabhūtāni cātmeni,
Ihṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ VI.29

The man who identifies himself initially with his wife and children, friends and relatives when he begins to progress on the path indicated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is able to expand his interest and begins to identify himself slowly with the men of his clan and village, his co-religionists and countryman and ultimately all human beings or even all the created beings. This is the highest teaching of democratic religion. To reach this height one has to shed his individual pride and ego, position, colour, possessions and all other narrow loyalties. When he reaches this height the entire world becomes his family 'Vasudhaiva kutumbakam'.

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānam sarvabhūtāni cātmani,
Īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ VI.29

The man who identifies himself initially with his wife and children, friends and relatives when he begins to progress in the path indicated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he widens his interests and begins to identify himself slowly with the good of his clan and village. His consciousness grows further to embrace and ultimately all human beings or even all the created beings. This is the highest reaching of the spiritual evolution. To reach this height one has to shed his individual pride and ego, egotism, selfish possessions and all other narrow loyalties. When he reaches this height the entire world becomes his family 'Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam'.

THE SATI CULT IN TAMILNADU

BY

M. ARUNACHALAM

Introduction :

Tamil literature lays great emphasis on the married life. The two great divisions in classical poetry are Romantic poetry (*aham*) and Heroic Poetry (*puram*), where romantic poetry treats of love themes, and heroic poetry deals with all other themes. The major part of the Śaṅgham poetry is love poetry. Besides, among the four *āshramas* or stages in life, the *brahmachārya* (student), the *grahasta* (married state or *illaṛam*), *vānaprastha* (seclusion in the forest) and *sannyāsaa* (ascetic), that of the householder had the greatest importance, although the sannyāsa stage was equally respected. The householder's life meant the life of love between a man and a woman. The *Kuṛaḷ* says that only this (*ilvāzhkai*) is real *aṛam* (a virtuous life).[1] The grand old dame of Tamil letters, Avvaiyar, is never tired of singing its glory : "Anything other than *illaṛam* (married life) is not the right *aṛam*".[2] Speaking about the four *purusharthas* or goals of life, *aṛam*, *poruḷ*, *inbam*, and *vīdu*, she says elsewhere that only that is true pleasure where the mind of man and woman are one in love.[3] The love of the couple was such that the woman wishes that her husband should become her husband even in a future birth ; "If this birth ends and we are born again, may you be my lover and may I be the dweller in your heart" says an young woman in the *Kuṛunthohai* verse.[4]

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1. அறன் எனப்பட்டதே இல்வாழ்க்கை... —குறள் 46.
2. இல்லறமல்லது நல்லற மன்று —அவ்வை, கொன்றை வேந்தன்.
3 காதல் இருவர் கருத்தொருமித்து — ஆதரவு பட்டதே இன்பம் —அவ்வை தனிப்பாடல்.
4. இம்மை மாறி மறுமையாயினும் நீயா கியர்தம் கணவனே,
யாஞகியர் நின்னெஞ்சு நேர்பவளே' —குறுந்தொகை 46.

Instances can be multiplied. The man-woman concept is fundamental to all Indian concepts of society and religion. Siva is Ardhanārīśvara, Sakti and Sivam, inseparable. When St. Appar is vouchsafed a vision of Kailās in Tiru Aiyāṟu, he sees the whole universe of man and animals as male and female, together.[5] So in that basic point of view, the two together form one unit, the unit not only for family life but for all life. In that unit, man as the stronger partner is dominant, and woman, though a better half, is yet a weaker sex and so plays a subordinate role. Laws and social customs laid down that she looked upto her partner as a partner for life and so she could not think of another man. This characteristic of being loyal to the wedded husband is called chastity and she is called a *pativratha*, one to whom her husband is both a husband and master (*pati*).

A woman's life is virtually closed at her husband's death; in Hindu society in the past, she could not marry again and she was expected to lead a life of penance and self-negation. She was even expected to give up her life on the funeral pyre of her husband and such a practice was called *sati.* Many willingly and voluntarily gave up their lives no doubt, but as social customs became rigid, at some stage in the evolution of civilization, coercion came in and the widow, whether she liked it or not, was compulsorily forced to get into the flames and die. What is meant by *sati* here is the self-immolation of a woman, on the death of her husband usually on the funeral pyre. The cult is alien to Tamilnadu, although we have even many historical instances of such self-immolation.

We shall examine in this paper the Sati customs in general leading upto the banning of the practice by Bentick in 1829 and the prevalence of this custom in Tamil nad and the conditions under which such *sati* was undertaken, and the status of such women.

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5. ஐயாறு அடைகின்றபோது, காதன்படப் பிடியோடும் கன்று வருவதை கண்டேன்.

—அப்பர் தேவாரம் 4.3.1: பதிகம் முழுமையும்.

Self-Immolation:

The concept of self-immolation has been tragically made familiar to us in the modern day, by fasting or burning oneself against public wrongs, when other means of redress had failed. It is an emotional sequel to resentment and humiliation, resented by individuals. Tamil poetic tradition would tell us that king Kōpperumchōḻan practised self-immolation by what is called *Vadakkiruttal* (facing north and sitting in that posture and fasting till death) because of dissatisfaction with his two sons. There have been two important historical instances of self-immolation in recent political history which it may be worthwhile to remember here.

There was one Nabi Khan, a muslim adventurer in the ranks of Chanda sahib at the time of the Company's wars with the Arcot Nawab. Himself and the *poligars* who were his allies were defeated and he retreated to the Srivilliputhur fort in 1768. As he was unable to storm the fort, he prepared to enter the temple and through the temple force an entry into the fort. The public, which was strong, objected but he gave no heed. Thereupon, one Bhaṭṭāchārya of the temple, profusely decking himself in the usual *dvadasa namas*, went to the top of the tower and, casting all curses on the infidel invader, hurled himself down. Naturally his body was dashed to smithereens. Nabi Khan's forces which witnessed this act refused to enter the temple and retreated from the town. This incident is narrated by Caldwell.[6]

The other case was of a servant of the Madurai Minakshi temple who threw himself down from the temple tower and died as a protest against the unfair tax collected from four tax free (*sarvamānya*) villages of the temple. This is found in a temple inscription of 1710, of the days of Vijayaranga Chokkanātha Nāyak of Madurai. Needless to say this sacrifice had the desired effect and the tax was waived.

Thus we may note that self immolation has been resorted to by people in Tamil nad for a variety of reasons in the past.

6. Bishop Caldwell: History of Tirunelveli—

One is to fulfil a vow made to a deity in a temple for some personal or family purpose to cure an ailment in some one, to obtain a victory in the battle etc. Such instances are met with in the *bharani* poems. We hear that the left hand holds the head by the tuft while the right arm outs as under the head and offers it to Kāḷi; after placing the head on the *pitha* (altar) the two hands remain folded, in the posture of a prayer. This is generally done only to Kāḷi. We have an inscriptional record of this in Mallam (Tiruvanmur) which records the donation of land to a man in commemoration of such an act done by his father.

We have mentioned the instances of a bhaṭṭāchārya and a servant of the Meenakshi temple who jumped from the temple tower for highlighting a public wrong. An Anantapur inscription from Donekallu in the 11th century records the self-stabbing of one of two *gavuṇdas* in the presence of the two Brahmins who forcibly enjoyed the properties of their grounds, on seeing which the brahmins gave back the land. But in honour of this occasion the other *gavuṇda* had vowed to pay the other, extra share on the land in question.

There have been cases of self immolation as a human sacrifice. A case of such self-immolation, not voluntary, but forced, is met with not in the early periods but in the 18th century in the Tirupparankunṛam area. The person concerned was chosen as the human sacrifice by the elders of the locality and he was made to jump down from the temple tower. This was due to a verdict of the village people and compensation was given to the family of the dead man.

Then there is the well known case of *Velan*. The *Vēlaikkārar* are a group of devoted soldiers of the king who give up their lives as a duty when any illness afflicted him, or a defeat. Even when he died a natural death, they also gave up their lives by stabbing themselves.

An inscription of Tiru Nanipalli records the immolation by fire of four subjects on account of a land dispute in the 17th year of Kulōttunga I (1087 A.D.)

Self immolation has been quite common in the public cause. Ilaven madisudivan, son of Ponnandai the temple devaradiyal, took a vow that he would immolate himself if the *maṇḍapam* on the outer *prakāra* of the Śiva temple at Araiyaninallūr, which had remained unfinished for a long time, was completed. It was completed soon and this man immolated himself. For this heroic act his decendants were given by the temple authorities 1000 kuḻis of land (over three acres) as *Udirappatti*. This was in the tenth year of Māravarman Sundarapāṇḍiyan.

In the modern day we have seen instance of college boys pouring kerosene on themselves and dying on some political issue, namely a protest against the introduction of Hindi and so on. Those were public causes. although the action was misguided, and so they are cases of self-immolation. Otherwise, as for :example, a woman burning herself and dying out of her husband's or mother-in-law's cruelty, becomes merely an act of suicide.

Fasts undertaken by Mahātma Gāndhi, unto death, were fortunately stopped by the parties concerned, uniting and inducing him to break the fast and the British Government also making some concessions; otherwise they would have ended up as a case of self-immolation. The case of Terence Macsweency, the Irish patriot and Mayor, who fasted unto death for achieving freedom for his country, may be recalled in this context. Such acts of self-immolation were effective in focussing world attention on the problem.

Suicides are of course self-immolation, but are due to one's own frustration. A suicide for bodily ailment is common and it seems to have been prevalent in Karnāṭaka. King Sōmēśvara gave up his life by ceremonially drowning himself in the River Tungabhadra because of an unbearable bodily ailment. There are many such cases of suicide in the modern day. But these and similar cases of suicide do not come under the scope of self-immolation we are examining here.

Thus we see the execution of the deed of self-immolation being done in several ways-cutting off the head and offering it,

jumping from the temple tower, drowning, fasting or sallokana. These are some times self-immolation and some times just suicide. But the sati is different, it is self-immolation always by fire.

Man should always consciously adhere to *dharma* or righteousness in all its broad connotations. But when *dharma* fails and *adharma* is done, whether with the knowledge of a person or without, whether consciously or otherwise. the person concerned is held at fault, When irrevocable harm has been done and when another life has been sacrificed, what is the expiation? Human beings of all categories have laid down their lives as an act of expiation. The life unjustly lost cannot be brought back. But how to do the least amends?

There is nothing dearer to man than his own life, and the laying down of one's own life in the circumstances has been considered the greatest expiation possible. This is also a case of self-immolation, we shall give below three instances, of course from legend and literature, where people had laid down their lives and the three cases are typical. One is the story of a king; the second is a case of mass self-immolation, in order to keep a promise. by middle class people; the last is the case of an unlettered, uncivilized hunter, who could not have known *dharma* or *adharma*.

The story of *Śilappadhikāram* is well known. Relying on the words of a goldsmith to his palace. the Pāṇdiya King Neduncheḻiyan believed that Kōvalan was guilty of the theft of his Queen's anklet and so without the least thought, he ordered his guards to behead Kōvalan and get back the anklet. In those days theft was punished with beheading. The real thief was the goldsmith but to conceal his theft he produced Kōvalan as a thief, Kōvalan was killed. Kaṇṇaki, hearing of this, went to the King's court and there proved that the anklet in the hands of Kōvalan was her own and not the queen's and so he was not a thief. The King realised at once the terrible injustice done and not desiring to live after such an unjustice was attached to Pāṇdiya throne, fell down from the throne and gave up his life.

It is to be noted here that the Queen who was sitting by his side on the throne, on seeing the death of her husband, gave up her own life as there was no future for her after his death. Now the death of the Pāṇḍiyan King was a case of instantaneous self-immolation, the like of which is not known.

The second case relates to the Vēḷāḷar family. A merchant killed his wife and she began to stalk him as a ghost. When he went to Palaiyanur-Alangadi, she took the form of his second wife and child and followed him. He got scent that this was a ghost and so appealed to the village elders to save him. There. were seventy *vēḷāḷars*. They believed the story of the woman and made him stay with her for the night, standing surety for her proper behaviour. But the ghost ate up the merchant in the night and went away. Finding that their promise had thus come to nothing, they made a fire and all the seventy immolated themselves in the fire.

This is a very ancient legend of the place of an act of immolation by the vēḷāḷar *en masse*, celebrated in the songs of Jñānasambandhar and in the Periyapurāṇam. The last is a very touching case of a hunter name in the epic poēm *Maṇimēkhalai*. Trying to comfort the queen when her son Prince Udayakumāran has been killed, the old woman, Vasandavai, tells this story. A deer in an advanced state of pregnancy was going towards a water spring to quench its thirst. A hunter saw it from a distance from his place of concealment. He shot a powerful arrow at the deer, which pierced through its womb and flew out at the other end. The full grown young within the womb fell out and bleated piteously. The hunter went near and saw the dying deer beside the newly delivered kid. Out of deep remorse at thus inadvertently killing the deer which was pregnent, the hunter immediately gave up his own life.

Self immolation by young women who are forced by their parents to marry some one whom the particular woman did not like to marry for various reasons is common throughout history. It is also very common in the modern day. Such young women

had been known dying by hanging, by falling into the well and drowning, by taking poisons, such as the oleander root ground with gingely oil, and by pouring kerosene on themselves and setting fire to them. In the modern day there are easily available many kinds of poisons used in agriculture as pesticides and they take a heavy toll of lives every year. Zinc sulphide, a black powder commonly known as rat-poison, and a patent liquid pesticide used for spraying, follidol, are the most common poisons taken by such women.

There is an interesting and hoary legend relating to an young girl who would not marry a ruler but entered the fire instead and immolated herself. During the days of a despotic ruler by name Vishṇuvardhana in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam area, was born a fine girl in the Ārya Vaisya community in the family of one Kusumba Chetty. She grew up into a most beautiful damsel and her beauty reached the ears of the ruler, who immediately took steps to secure her and marry her. But she refused. Unable to contain his overtures, she entered the fire and emerging as the goddess Kannika Paramēsvari, she destroyed the ruler. Thereafter she came to be worshipped as the deity Kannika Paramēsvari, (The Paramēswari or Parāsakthi as the Virgin) not only by the Ārya Vaisya Community but by all the people. Her temple is situated in the heart of the city of Madras at the Kothawal Bazaar and it has vast endowments in the shape of buildings, jewels and money. Naturally legends grew round her and they say that she destroyed Mahishāsura as Durga in the Kritayuga, the royal dynasties as Rēnuka, the mother of Parasurāma in the Trethyoga and Kamsa and a host of others as the Mahamaya a Kalika, the sister of Krishna, in the Dwapara yuga. All these legends have of course grown round the self-immolation of an young girl.

Scriptural Sanction

The word *sati* ordinarily means a true, good and faithfull wife. In the context of a married man's death, *sati* has come to mean the self-immolation of his wife on the funeral pyre of her husband. In Tamil this is called *uḍankaṭṭai ēṛudal*, meaning

'mounting the (burning) logs (of the funeral pyre) along with the husband's body.' This is also known as *tip-pāydal,* jumping into the fire. It is *saha gamanam* (going together) in Sanskrit. The term *sati* had come to be spelt as *suttee,* in the 18–19 centuries when it was common to have many irrational spellings in the English language for Indian terms.

Sati is an act of self-immolation, arising out of *personal* grief. It is not a reaction or resentment against any *public* wrong. If it arises out of genuine grief and the pangs of permanent separation and the resultant feeling of impossibility of living after the dead husband, it is a different matter. But in the whole of North India, Sati had existed as a result of religious repression of widowhood and what is strange, scriptural sanction was invoked for this cruel practice of forcing women into the *sati* fire. Iqbal Kaul has pointed out that the Rg. Vēdic text 10.18.7, 'anasravo, namival suratne arohantu janaye yonim *agre*' (meaning without tears, without sorrow, bedecked with jewels, let wives go up to the altar first) was corrupted (last word) as *agni,* and this changed the meaning into 'let the wives go into the fire'. This mangled version seems to have had fearful consequences by claiming a heavy toll of the lives of widows. The practice of *sati* was only a post-vēdic practice. Originally there seems to have been the practice of the widow being united with the husband's brother by social custom. The post-vēdic *Grihya sutras* and the *Artha sāstras* permitted widow re-marriage.

Sati was not prescribed by the *Itihāsas.* The *Mahā nirvāṇa tantra,* which was a Sakta scripture, says that a woman entering her husband's funeral pyre goes to hell. Classic Sanskrit writers like Bana[7] and Sutraka opposed *sati.* *Dharma sāstras* and early

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7. The *Harsha Charitra* of Bhattabana has some remarks on the self-immolation of a sati. " If a woman's husband dies abroad, she was allowed to burn herself with her *padukas* (sandals) ".

" A *sati* was to die with all her ornaments etc., with expanding buds and with a smiling face; she was not to show any regret at the step she was taking ". But Bana's Kadambari is very clear on the question of sati:

smritis do not prescribe it. Only later *purāṇas* like the *Garuda-purāṇa* sing the glories of a sati. The *Bhāgavata purāṇa* says that when Krishna passed away his wives committed sati.

The early *smritis* permitted the widow to lead a virtuous life according to the *sāstras*. But the *purāṇas*, glorified *sati* and declared that when she mounted the burning funeral pyre, the sins of both the husband and the wife, however great they might have been, were consumed by the fire and did not attach themselves to their souls in future births as *karma*. The sati concepts are said to relate to the post-Gupta period in history.

Prevalence to Sati

Sati was widely prevalent in North India no doubt, but it does not appear to have been coercive but was only a voluntary action of the woman in the early period. In A.D. 510, the wife of King Bhanugupta ascended her husband's funeral pyre. King

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"Following one in death is exceedingly useless. It is a way traversed (followed) by the illiterate, it is a pastime of infatuation, it is a path of ignorance, it is an act of rashnesa, it is taking a narrow view of the matter, it is a piece of great carelessness, and it is a blunder due to folly; that life is resigned when one's father, brother, friend or husband is dead. If life does not leave one of itself, it should not be resigned. If this matter be thought over, (it will be seen that) this giving up of one's life is for one's own interest; for it serves as a remedy for the unbearable agonies of sorrow suffered by one's self. It brings no good whatever to the dead man. In the first place it is not a remedy to bring him back to life; nor is it a means of adding to the stock of his religious merit, nor the cause of securing a world of bliss for him, nor a remedy against his falling in hell, nor the way to see him, nor the cause of mutual union. This (the dead man) being helpless is taken to quite a different place, that is laid in store for him by the ripening of the fruits of his own actions; while the other (the person giving up life) simply incurs the sin of suicide (lit. incurred by a man killing himself). But living (i.e. if he does not kill himself) he can do much good to the dead man and himself by the offering of water and the like; but dying after, to neither".

(P. 227, of the English translation in Bana's Kadambari, ed. M. R. Kale, 1968.

Harshavardhana's mother Yasomati (first half of the 7th century) gave up her life by force of will when she knew that her husband would die in a short while on account of some ailment. This is indeed very remarkable. We have also the famous instance of Harsha himself rescuing his sister Rājyasri from the funeral flames of her husband Grahavarman who died in battle. In the eighth century, queens in Kashmir and Nēpal do the same rite. In the tenth century, Gundambe, wife of Chāḷukya Satyāsraya, committed sati on her husband's death in battle. Memorial hero stones in the Deccan and the Central India tell us that the practice was then widely prevalent.

But the frequent Muhammedan invasions in North India gave a new edge to the practice of Sati. They were always a scene of danger and dishonour to women every where. The Muslim invaders always pulled down temples and destroyed the idols worshipped there and what is more they seized the women and carried them captives and added them to their harems. This was naturally most revolting to the Hindus. On this account, the martial race of the Rajputs who fought them tooth and nail seem to have adopted *sati* as a universal custom so that women could not fall into the hands of the Muslims It was there given the name of *jauhar*. The Rajputs went all out for the battle with the Moghuls and they made sure that their women folk could come to no harm by following *sati* immediately after battle.

When faced with overwhelming forces, they never contemplated any defeat or return but died to the last man. So their women also had to die. They were thus the greatest observers of this rite and there are scores of incidents in history where the Rajput women made a huge fire and immolated themselves in large numbers on the death of their men in battle. This is not a case of mounting the funeral pyre, but of giving up of their lives immediately after their husbands' death. This happened where-ever the Rajputs lived. The Senji fort is in South Arcot district in the heart of Tamil nad, and when the ruler Dēsingu Rājan (Tēj Singh according to history) fell in battle in 1713 A.D., all

the women folk entered the fire and immolated themselves, says the famous Dēsingu Rājan ballad.[8]

The sorrowing mothers and sisters, not only the widows, followed the dead man on the funeral pyre. This was known as *saha gamana* and *anugamana* (going together) or *anumarana* (dying together). The place of *sati* was commemorated in stone as *Mahasati* stone and there are many such monuments in Chittore and Udaipur. (Sometimes the *ma-sati* stones would refer to the mothers, *ma-mother*, who died with their son.) The *ma-sati* stones have been mentioned in Tamil *puṟam* grammar.

From a description of the Chakkravalakkottam given in *Maṇimēkhalai*,[9] we learn that there were temples or mausoleums constructed on the burial places of women who gave up their lives with their husbands. (These might have been real burial places or places where the ashes collected from the cremation

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8. ராணியம்மாள் அழுகிற சத்தம் செஞ்சியில் கேட்டது...
ரரஜா பக்கத்தில் வந்தானையா, ராணியம்மாளும்...
நானுங்கூட வாறேனையா என் பிராணநாதா...
அக்கினிக் குழியை வெட்டச்சொன்னாள் ராணியம்மாளும்...
முழுகி ஸ்நானம் பண்ணினாளையா ராணியம்மாளும்,
இனி இல்லாத உடைமை பூட்டினாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.
தலை நிறைய புட்பம் சூட்டினாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.
மஞ்சட் பாவாடை உடுத்தினாளையா ராணியம்மாளும்....
ஆகாயவாணியை வேண்டிக்கொண்டாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.
அக்கினிக் குழியைச் சுற்றிவந்தாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.
கண்கள் குளிர ராஜாவைப் பார்த்தாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.
ராஜாவுடனே தீயில் குளித்தாள் ராணியம்மாளும்.

It is to be noted here that the bride who performs sati, decks herself with all ornaments and flowers and putting on new clothes, enters the fire with a smile on her lips.

9. அருந்தவர்காயினும் அரசர்க்காயினும்...
ஒருங்குடன் மாய்ந்த பெண்டிர்க்காயினும்...
இறந்தோர் மருங்கிற் சிறந்தோர் செய்த
குறியவும் நெடியவும் குன்று கண்டன்ன
சுட்டுமன் ஓங்கிய நெடுநிலை கோட்டமும். மணிமேகலை 6.54-59.

ground after the bodies of the husband and wife were cremated, were buried in an urn).

In an age when child marriages were common, child widows, although they could not remarry, were mercifully prohibited from doing *sati*, if they had not attained puberty at the time. So also were pregnant women, and women with very young babies, exempted. In the age when procreation was scant and when the convocation address laid down that the pupil discharged from the, gurukula by the rishi should not break the line of progeny '*praja tantum ma vyavachetsih*',[10] this exemption is quite understandable. (This reminds us of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* verse (9) where the poet says that his patron the Pāṇḍiya King Palyagasalai mudu kudumi notified that some types of people in the enemy territory border might evacuate as a war was impending – Cows, peaceful brahmins, women, sick people, those who had no children to perform the ritual of liberation to them on death etc.)[11] Al Baruni, the Muslim writer who came into India along with the raids of Ghazni Muhammed and stayed in the Punjab by 1030 A.D. has recorded that women of advanced age and women who had guardianship of children on their hands were not required to commit sati. His opinion is that women were not forced by relatives to die with the husband, but in some cases, the widows voluntarily ended their lives, unable to bear the possible ill treatment to them from the nearest of kin to the husband. Of course there could have been many cases where the

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10. Taittiriya Upanishad, Sikshavalli (i)—11 : 1 : Satyam vada, Dharmam chara, evadhyayan ma pramedah, acharyaya priyam dhanam ahritya praja tantum ma vyevachetsih: "Speak the Truth, follow dharma, do not neglect your studies, give money to the teacher's context and do not break your line of progcny".

11. ஆவும் ஆனியற் பார்ப்பன மாக்களும்
பெண்டிரும் பிணியுடையீரும் பேணி
தென்புல வாழ்நர்க்கு அருங்கடன் இருக்கும்
பொன்போற் புதல்வற் பெரும் தீரும்,
நும் எம்மம்பு கடிவிடுதும் நும்மரன் சேர்மின், — புறநானூறு9:1-5

widow immolated herself, unable to bear her life-long separation from the husband whom she had loved very dearly.

Sallekhana was one way of performing sati; this meant courting death by fasting. Usually Jain monks had resorted to this practice as a religious rite. Bhadrabāhu the Jain āchārya of Ujjain and his disciple Chandra Gupta Maurya doing sallekhana and giving up their lives in the Sravana Belgola area near Mysore in the 3rd century B.C. has been recorded. This practice was not unknown among the Tamils. We know that the poet Kapilar, on the death of his friend and patron, Pāri, sat facing north and gave up his life by fasting.[12] It is recorded that Maci kabte, the wife of Ganga Mara simha was a Saiva but on his death she meditated on the Jaina and attained salvation by fasting.

Opposition to Sati

Curiously enough, and also perhaps naturally, opposition to *sati* came from the Muslims! Women formed part of the war spoils of the Muslim adventurers and when there were no women to be captured and added to their harems, they were understandably disappointed and angry. So they tried to stop this system of *sati*. Some of the Muslim rulers of Delhi sought somehow to mitigate the evils of this custom. Muhammed-bin-Tuklaq the quixotic ruler was the first ruler responsible for the prohibition of coercion in this practice. We are told that a system of official permission or licence was introduced for *sati* and when it was actually done, a government official was made to be present to ensure that there was no compulsion or fear in the matter for the women concerned. Akbar removed the element of external compulsion in *sati* and he is said to have saved many women from being burnt against their consent. In

12. Vide verse 236 Puṛanāṉūṟu. Here the poet laments: "Oh great Pāri, your behaviour is not in consonance with our friendship, because you asked me to stay back and so saying you gave up your life. May fate bring us together in the next birth, as we have been in this life". So saying he adopted the practice of *Vaḍakkiruttal* and gave up his life.

one case he rescued a widow from the fire and imprisoned her son who forced her to go into the fire. Women were dissuaded from sati and a monthly subsistence allowance was also given to them. Jehangir, who ruled after Akbar is said to have forbidden sati on pain of death. Aurangazebe actually banned sati but his ban was not fully effective. Albuquerque who captured Goa first issued a decree abolishing sati (1518).

As a religion, we find that Sikhism attached the greatest importance to women. "How can the women be deemed inferior" asks Guru Nānak, "When they have given birth to kings and prophets ?" The third Sikh Guru Amar Dass (1552-72) condemned sati in strong terms. He declared that they who immolated themselves in the *sati* manner were not true satis, but she is a true *sati* who gives up her life the moment she learns of her husband's death. He also held that widows might continue to live on in chastity and contentment, always remembering their husbands. Guru Hargobind called woman 'the conscience of Man.' All the Sikh gurus had condemned the custom of sati long before any notice was taken of it by Akbar and the others. However, in spite of these strictures by the gurus, we find that the four wives of the great Sikh hero Ranjit Singh committed sati ! The ten wives of Surchet Singh and his entire harem mounted the funeral pyre.

The Mahratta rulers and the Vijayanagar rulers all discountenanced the practice. The great Mahratta queen Ahalyabai discouraged *sati.* But yet, custom and social tradition were powerful forces in perpetuating sati and individuals had been powerless to do anything about it. Wellesly (1748–1805) and Minto (1807-13), Governor-generals of India tried measures to abolish sati, but they were unsuccessful. Raja Rammohan Roy, the enlightened social reformer was a powerless witness in the sati of his own sister-in-law much against her own wishes. This experience made him carry on a powerful tirade against this cruel practice of compulsory sati. He was only vindicating the moral conscience of the Indians for pleading for the abolition of the cruel rites of sati, making a most touching appeal to his

people by reminding them of the glory of Indian womanhood the real *Sakti's* of the nation. The atmosphere was ripe and in the reign of William Bentick in 1829 a regulation was promulgated prohibiting sati absolutely and making all concerned in a sati punishable by law. There was vehement opposition to it from the orthodox quarters and it died down in time.

But law is one thing and the pangs of love is another. Cases have been reported in the daily press of infrequent cases of sati, out of extreme love and anguish. Princess Naraine of Narsinghgarh, in Madhya Pradesh on the death of her husband fed her five months old baby, and set fire to herself with a picture of her husband in her hands in May 1962. The widow of Brigadier Jabar singh, comptroller of the Maharajah of Jodhpur threw herself on the burning pyre of her husband. There are a few such rare cases. In circumstances like these, we can neither praise sati nor censure it.

Pattini and Sati

The terms *Pattini* and *Sati,* though Sanskrit words, have great significance in the Tamil language. Both mean a true, good and faithful wife. A *pattini* is a *pativrata.* Iḷango adihal defining the purpose to which he wrote the great classic *S'ilappadhikāram* gives three purposes of which one is "the glorification of the *pattini* by the noble persons"[13] Kaṇṇaki is the pattini so glorified in the epic and towards the end she becomes the pattini-goddess. It has been stated by the *Kuṟaḷ* and many others including Iḷango. that the rains will come down at the command of a *Pattini.* Iḷango would declare that in the land of a *pattini,*

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13. அரை சியல் பிழைத்தோர்க்கு அறங்கூற்றுவதூ உம்,
உரை சால் பத்தினிக்கு உயர்ந்தோர் ஏத்தலும்,
ஊழ்வினை உருத்து வந்து ஊட்டும் என்பதூ உம்
சூழ்வினைச் சிலம்பு காரணமாகச்
சிலப்பதிகாரம் என்னும் பெயரால்
நாட்டுதும் யாமோர் பாட்டுடைச் செய்யுள்.

—சிலப்பதிகாரப் பதிகம் 55-60.

the rains will never fail, the land will never lose its fertility, and the rule of the king will never swerve from righteousness.

Maṇimēkhalai goes a step further and declares that the *pattini* woman would enter the fire and perform *sati,* to use a later day language, on the death of their husband: "When her husband dies, her very breathing will be hot like the furnace and unable to contain her grief, she would immediately give up her life: if this is not done, she would enter the fire as though she were entering the waters of a cool spring. If she is unable to do this she would adopt the austere life of widowhood praying for union with her husband in the next birth[14]. So we find that entering the fire, the later day *sati,* has been prescribed as a solution for widowhood.

Marudi: The chief characteristic about a *pattini* is that she knows no God but her husband; at such a pattini's behest the rains will fall and so on. The epic *Maṇimēkhalai* gives a fine story to illustrate this. There was in the past a young brahmin woman named Marudi. One day as she was returning from a bath in the Kavēri, the young prince, son of Kaganden Chōḷa ruler of the land, beckoned to her with an evil intent. She was horrified. She went to the temple and spoke to the deity dwelling in the *Bhuta chatukkam,* thus; "I had never been untrue to my husband. I have been doing all my duties like a chaste wife. It is said that a chaste woman will never cause another harbour evil thoughts about her. But how does it happen that the prince has evil thoughts on me?"

The deity replied: "What you say is true. A chaste woman can certainly cause rains to pour. Bnt you cannot do that. No

14. காதலர் இறப்பிற் கனை எரி பொத்தி
ஊதுலைக் குருகின் உயிர்த்தகத் தடங்காது
இன்னுயிர் ஈவர்; ஈயா ராயின்,
நன்னீர்ப் பொய்கையின் நளியெரிபுகுவர்;
நளியெரி புகா அர் ஆயின் அன்பரோடு
உடனுறை வாழ்க்கைக்கு நோற்றுடம்படுவர்.
—மணிமேகலை, 2: 42-47.

doubt you have been dutiful to your husband. But you have been going to festivals and been worshipping other gods than your husband. If you leave off all this, you can cause rains and no one can have evil thoughts on you. The offender will be punished by the King in seven days."[15]

So this will give us a clear picture of not merely chaste woman, but give us the concept of a great *pattini*. The ancient Tamil classical legends of Marudi and Ādirai will give us a clear picture of the concept of a true *pattini*.

Ādirai : The story of Adirai narrated in *Maṇimēkhalai* is relevant in this context. Chapter 16, entitled "The giving of alms by Ādirai" narrates the story of Ādirai. Holding the divine vessel in her hand, Manimēkhalai is advised to go for alms to the house of Ādirai to receive her first handful of rice. Kāyachandikai tells her in detail the story of Ādirai: "She was a dutiful lady wife of one Saduvan, a merchant. He had fallen on evil ways, deserted her and was living with a prostitute. After seizing all his wealth, she drove him away. He went with a group of merchants on a ship to try his fortunes overseas. There was a storm in which the ship was wrecked. Holding fast to a mast, he reached the shores of the Nāgaland safely. But the others who reached the coast of the Cholanad did not find him and so they thought he had died on the seas and gave the news to Ādirai. Hearing this she naturally thought he was dead and in order to give up her life she built a fire on the cremation ground and entered it. But the fire did her no harm; her dress, her hair, her flower garlands, her sandal paste etc. were unaffected. An unseen voice declared that her husband Saduvan was not dead and that he would soon return to her. He accordingly returned to her with presents from the Nagas. Ādirai was such a chaste and virtuous woman that the first alms should be received from her."[16] The matter for our consideration her is that when she believed that her husband had died, she made preparations to enter the fire. This particular act gave her a high

15. Vide Maṇimēkhalai, Ch. 22: lines 45-77 and line 147.

16. *Maṇimēkhalai* Chapter 16.

position as a great *pativrata* of Tamil nad. We note that Agni would not scorch her, as he would not scorch Sita when she entered the fire as a test of her chastity, even at the behest of Rāma after his return from the staying of Rāvaṇa.

A Rare Instance of Mass Sati.

The Sati of a number of the women of the *Kuṛumbar* clan is mentioned in the Makensie manuscripts (D. 3838). The Kuṛumbar according to the writing, were of the cowherd clan (Iḍaiyar). During the rule of the Vijayanagar Rāyar they gained importance and were given the control of many areas near modern Madras such as Neḍumāran. Anaikkaṭṭu, Salappakkalm and Nerumbur. They had built small fortresses and were bent upon teasing the higher caste Vellalar and Mudaliyar. But these would not be cowed down. The Kuṛumber then had recourse to a trick in order to make those people bow before them.

They constructed an enclosure and a narrow entrance over every street, street corner, gardens and similar places and seated themselves in front. When the higher caste people came there, they had to bow down to pass through the gateways put up. This would have been tantamount to bowing before the Kuṛumbar who were seated in front. But, they did not bow, but placed their legs across first and then moved on without bowing. This enraged the Kuṛumbar. Their tyranny became unbearable. Now the high caste people got together and worked out a dangerous plan. For the rural barber the Velalar and Mudaliyar were the greatest patrons. So they called the local barber and asked him to devise a way for getting over the Kuṛumbar indignity. He agreed. Then he called together all the barbers in the surrounding areas and together all of them devised a way of getting rid of the Kuṛumbar.

Then it was a custom among the Kuṛumbar that whenever a death occurred in the family of one Kuṛumbar, all of the males assembled there had a tonsure as a mark of grief and respect for the deceased. It so happened that just at that time an old Kuṛumbar died. All the barbers were summoned to make

a simultaneous tonsure. The barbers came and the Kuṛumbar were all seated together without any exception. There was a barber for each Kuṛumban. It had been secretly agreed among the barbers that when they finished shaving the head and the razor was nearing the nape of the neck, they were to draw it deep across the throat and kill the Kuṛumbar. So all of them did accordingly at the same time, so that all the Kuṛumbar died. No one was left to punish the barbers! The widows of the deceased Kuṛumbar lighted a huge fire in Nerumbar and gave up their lives in it. The story goes on that all their fortresses were demolished and only some stones remained as ruins to indicate the rule of the Kurumbar there once upon a time. This might be a true story or probably a folk tale of some distant past. The fact remains that all the women performed a sati in a common fire which reminds us of the sati of the Rajput women.

Husband's Death and After

We may first note how a woman can decide her future life after the death of her husband. A number of ways seem to have been open for her according to the depth of her love and her own temperament.

The manner in which a woman can decide her future life on the death of her husband has been laid down and adopted in several ways. The highest is that of immediately giving up of her life. This we see in the life of Kōpperundēvi, who died simply on the throne when her husband, remorseful at the great injustice done to Kōvalan, fell down from the throne and died. This is a supreme sacrifice not easily attainable by many. This is narrated in *Silappadhikāram*.[17]

17. கெடுகஎன் ஆயுள் என
மன்னவன் மயங்கி வீழ்ந்தனனே, தென்னவன்
கோப்பெருந்தேவி குலைந்தனள் நடுங்கிக்
கணவனை இழந்தோர்க்குக் காட்டுவது இல்லென்று
இணையடி தொழுது வீழ்ந்தனளே மடமொழி.
—சிலப்பதிகாரம் 20: 77-81.

The death of Mandodari on hearing of the fall of Rāvaṇa is also similar, according to Kambar, Hearing of the death of the mighty Rāvaṇa, Mandodari his queen, who 'never had occasion to think of Ravana because he had never been away from her mind,' hastened to the battlefield where he lay slain. She cried profusely saying that she who had desired to die before him is now destined to remain after him, and gave up her life embracing his body.[18] But her end is not given in Vālmiki. On the battlefield she bursts forth into a long lamentation and falls into a swoon; she is consoled by other women, and she returns with them to the city after the funeral rites of Rāvaṇa are over.[19] Kambar obviously has made Mandodari into a great *pativrata* and a *sati*, in the true Tamil tradition.

The Tamil *Skanda purāṇam* says that when the news of the death of Sūrapadma reached his queen Padumakomaḷai, she gave up her life instantaneously without uttering a word, and remarks that such is the characteristic of the supreme love of the wife for her husband.[20]

A second way is similar to this one where the widow silently bears the grief for a short while and gives up her life when the

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18. Vide Kamba Rāmāyaṇam Yuddba Kāṇḍam (S, Rajam Edition), Chapter 38; verses 12-15, 21-29 of:

    நினைந்ததும் மறந்ததும் இலாத நெஞ்சினாள்-12:;
    பொன் தழைத்த பொருனரு மார்பினைத்
    தன்தழைக் கைகளால் தழுவித் தனி
    நின்றழைத்துயிர்த்தான், உயிர் நீங்கினாள்-29;

19. Vide Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam, Yuddha Kāṇḍam, Canto III, verses 1-91, 122.

20. Kanda purāṇam, Yuddha Kāṇḍam, Chaptvr 15, verse 2:

    காவல் மன்னன் இறந்தனன் எதுமுரை கன்னத்துள்
    மேவும் எல்லையில் அசனி ஏறுண்டலெம்மணியே போல்
    தேவியாகிய பதுமகோமளை எனும் திருமங்கை
    ஆனி நீங்கினன் தலையனி ஆகியதது அன்றே.

    The author Kachiyappa Sivachāriyar had naturally known the handling of similar situations by Kamban and so he has stated here that as a supreme sati the queen instantaneously gave up her life.

funeral preparations are over and where his body is being lifted up and carried over to the cremation ground. This can be seen in the case of Ponnachi, who arranged for the commencement of the obsequies for her husband Piḷḷai Urangavillidasa and simply died when his body was being lifted out of the house. This very remarkable story is told in detail in the Vaishna *guru-parampara.*[21]

Life should be given up at will, by the widow on the death of her hnsband. This is the most noble act of a *pattini.* Where this is not possible, the next course is to get into the funeral pyre along with the body of the husband. Chitrapati, mother of Mādhavi and grandmother of Maṇimēkhalai, says: "We do not belong to the category of the *pattinip-peṇdir* (*pattini* women) of noble ancestry, who are immersed in great grief of the death of their husbands and vexed with the life which does not leave the body, enter the flames as though they were bathing in the cool waters of a tank."[22] This is what is generally termed as *sati.* The story of Queen Vanavenmadevi, mother of Rajaraja Chola belongs to this category.

A fourth would be making a fire and jumping into it. This is described in literature as similar to walking into a cool spring! The case of the Queen of Bhūtap-Pāṇḍiyan and of the Rajput women who died in flames on the death of the soldiers in battle belong to this category.

Heroic poetry describes the cases of women who walked to the battle field, spotted out the bodies of their husbands and on finding them dead, extracted the spear or sword from their

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21. Vide Gnrn Parampara prabhavam—Araysiappadi by Pinpalahiya Perumal Jiyar, 1878 edition pages 256-57—The obsequies for the two were done together.

22. காதலன் வீயக் கடுந்துயர் எய்திப்
போதல் செய்யா உயிரொடு புலந்து
நளியிரும் பொய்கை ஆடுநர் போல
முனி எரிப்புகூஉம் முதுகுடிப் பிறந்த
பத்தினிப் பெண்டிர் அன்லேம். —மணிமேகலை 18:11-15.

wounds and killed themselves with the same spear or sword.[23] This is quite a different category.

The last is the life of the widow. This state is mentioned by many in literature. Bhūtappāṇḍiyan Dēvi has given the most picturesque description of this state. In later history, although *sati* was practised by some, the life of a dedicated widow was the most common. This was the practice even at the time of the abolition of *sati* and has been so when the Hindu law was amended in Independent India, legalizing divorce in Hindu society.

Tamil Grammatical Convention

The subject of self-immolation by the wife of a soldier who died on the battle field has been taken note of as early as the days of Tolkāppiyar. This comes in as the subject for many themes. One is named *aanjikkanji* in *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷadhikāram* (*sutra 79*). *Anji* is fear. *Tolkāppiyam* mentions it as the theme expressing the women's horror on seeing the wounds of her husband killed in battle.[24] The commentator Nachinārkkiniyar (14th century) gives this text and gives as illustration a verse from the work *Tahadūr Yāttirai* (not extant now ; but compiled as verse 1404 in *Purattirattu,* also 14th century). "Ye, that would seek pleasures with this body, look at this young lady! She is now horrified to see her husband pierced by the spear of the enemy, beyond all recognition".[25] Kanji is a vast subject in

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23 கவ்வை நீர் வேலிக் கடிதேகாள் கற்புடைமை
வெல்லேல் வாய் வீழ்ந்தான் விறங்கெய்யோன்—அவ்வேலே
அம்பிற் பிறழுந் தடங்கணவன் காதற்
கொம்பிற் கும் ஆயிற்றே கூற்று.
—புறப்பொருள் வெண்பாமாலை வெண்பா 83.

24. நீத்த கணவற் றீர்த்த வேலிற்
பேர்த்த மனைவி ஆஞ்சியானும். —தொல்காப்பியம் பொருளதிகாரம்
புறத்திணையியல் 18 : அடி 12-13.

25. இன்பம் உடம்பு கொண் டெய்துவர் காண்மினோ
அன்பின் உயிர்புரக்கும் ஆரணங்கு—தன் கணவன்
அல்லாமை உட்கொள்ளும் அச்சம் பயந்ததே—
புல்லார் வேல் மெய் சிதைத்த புண்.
—தகடூர் யாத்திரை - புறத்திரட்டு 1404.

heroic poetry (*puṟam*) in *Tolkāppiyam,* covering a wide range of themes on the transience of life under various situations. This situation is called by the author, *aanji.*

But however, the earlier commentator Iḷampūraṇar (11th century) reads the text as *velirpeyartta* instead of peyetta and interprets it as "the *aanji* which depicts the woman, who on seeing her husband killed on the battle field, kills herself with the same spear". As he is the earlier writer naturally he takes this version as the text and cites an illustration from *Puṟapporuḷ veṇbāmālai* (83): "Chastity, being devoted to the husband, is indeed very cruel on this earth, girt by the roaring sea. The soldier who sought victory fell before the sharp spear. The same spear was the instrument of death to his loving wife of slender form and broad eyes bright like the arrow."[26]

According to this writer's view, this lady gives up her life on the death of her husband, by the same spear which killed him. This is certainly one way of heroic self-immolation.

Other themes in Tolkāppiyam are *mudenandam* and *malai nilai* (mentioned as *palai nilai* by Nacchinārkkiniyar). They shall be referred to later.

The subject of this self immolation seems to have been so well accepted in literary convention that we find the same *Puṟapporaḷ Veṇbāmālai,* an important and classical grammatical manual on *puṟam* or heroic poetry (9th century) after *Tolkāppiyam,* has made it a subject for poetry in the manual.

There are several themes on this topic. One is that given above as verse 83. The earlier verse (82) has the same theme of describing the noble character of the soldier's wife who seeks to end her earthly existence by ascending the funeral pyre of her husband. "Her husband bears the wounds caused by the discus weapon shot by the enemy with the frothing steeds. She plans to ascend the funeral pyre along with him and so this lady with the bright pendants asks her maids and friends to go

26. Vide note 22.

away (meaning thereby that they shall not stand in her way or prevent her)!"[27] This theme is also called *aanji k-kanji.*

Theme 154 named *tohai nilai* mentions the death of both the controlling chiefs on the battle field and the illustrative *veṉba* written by the author himself mentions the death of the women in a fire made for the purpose.

"Because of their hostility, the two kings holding sturdy spears, died on the battle field, leaving the land to grieve for a ruler. Their women fell into a raging fire and immolated themselves. Death whose belly is now full has in store even greater tragedy."[28]

We may take it that this practice was prevalent in the period 9 to 11th centuries at least; perhaps it might have gone into desuetude or disfavour by the 14th century. We shall show later through inscriptional evidence that the practice was in use in the period of the Chōḷa supremacy (till the end of the 13th century).

There are also two other themes on this subject. One is *malai-nilai* (261) which describes the women who is waiting to enter her husband's funeral pyre in the evening: "She remembered the words (of love) uttered by her husband and stood at the cremation ground with flames roaring, resolved to be a comrade for him on the pyre."[29]

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27. தாங்கிய கேளொடு தானும் எரிபுகப்
பூங்குழை யாயம் புலர்கென்றும் நீங்கா
விலாழிப் பரித்தானை வெந்திறலார் சீறூர்ப்
புலாழித் தலைக் கொண்ட புண்.
புறப்பொருள் வெண்பாமாலை வெண்பா 82.

28. மண்டமர்த் திணிதோள் மறங்கடை மனைவிபுலம்பக்
கண்திரன் வேல் மன்னர் களம்பட்டார்—பெண்டிர்
கடிதெழு செந்தீக் கழுமினார் இன்னும்
கொடிதே காண் ஆர்ந்தின்று கூற்று.
புறப்பொருள் வெண்பாமாலை, வெண்பா 154.

29. சோலை மயிலன்னாள் தன்கணவன் சொல்லிய சொல்
மாலை நினையா மனங்கடைசிக் காலைப்
பூகையழல் வேலோன் புணர்ப்பாகி நின்றாள்
அகையழல் ஈமத் தகத்து.
புறப்பொருள் வெண்பாமாலை, வெண்பா 261.

The next theme (262) *mudanandam* is also mentioned by Tolkāppiyar. It is the words of wonder uttered by the travellers who happened to see her give up her life in this manner: "Let the world understand that these were well united in wedlock now had only one soul; people who do not realise would say that they had two lives. Because the lives of the two, of him with the poison tipped spear and of her with the white bangles, left their bodies together."[80]

These are all poems of war and naturally they describe in detail and extol the act of self-immolation by the women folk.

Widowhood :

The life of a widow was very hard and rigid. She had to sleep on a rough mat on the floor, with no cot or bench. Ornaments were taboo for her. She had no upper garment except of course the *sari* which was wound round the top of her body also. She could not of course use turmeric or have kumkum which are the emblems of *sumangalihood* and auspiciousness. No cosmetics, no *tilak* on the forehead. She may of course put on religious marks like the sacred ash. She had only one meal a day under the strict regulations and was enjoined to make daily oblations to the memory of her husband. Widows were allowed to have their hair on their head upto about the eleventh century, after which period tonsure was enforced in some areas and in some communities. She had to pass her sari over the tonsured head, in a sort of semi-purdah.

And then there was the social ostracism on the widow imposed by society. She was prohibited from taking any important role in the functions in the home and in the festivals at home and in the temple. For example, she could not light a lamp on an auspicious occasion, draw *kolams*, participate in decking

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30. ஒருயிராக உணர்க உடன் கலந்தார்க்கு
ஈருயிரென்பர் இடைத்தெரியார்—போரில்
விடனேந்தும் வேலோற்கும் பெற்றுளையினாட்கும்
உடனே உலந்தது உயிர்.

புறப்பொருள் வெண்பாமாலை, வெண்பா 262.

children on auspicious occasions, not even appear first before the bride and bridegroom during weddings, wave a *harati* for them and so on. Such unacknowledged codes are limitless. Then the references to her by her own close kin as the luckless woman, the unfortunate one on whom one should not set eyes, the wretched woman and so on. Thus she had to lead an almost segregated life in her own homes–the home of her birth and the home of her married life. All these she had to put up with stoically and with great tolerance and restraint, until perhaps there were born some grandchildren who might learn to love a grandmother. This was then the particularly miserable aspect of a widow's normal life. If there was an unsympathetic mother-in-law or husband's sister-in-law in her married home, or a brother's wife in the home of her birth, the misery would be many times worse.

Avūr Mulankiḻar (in *Puṛanāṉūṛu* 261) refers to a woman who, on the death of her husband undergoes tonsure, removes all her ornaments and passes through considerable suffering as a widow. Such a state of widowhood is vividly described in *Puṛanāṉūṛu* by many poets like Peralavayar and Okkur Masattanar, and the women poets like Nappasalaiyar and Tayamkanniyar. They say that the food of the widows was the seeds of the water lily (verses 248, 250, 280 etc.).

Kaṇṇaki mentions the life of the widow in terms of intense scorn, when she learns of the unjust killing of Kōvalan by the orders of the King, She cries: 'Shall I be like the women who have recourse to hard penances, go out and bathe in the cool waters of sacred tanks and observe the rigorous disciplines of widowhood, on the burning away of the body of their loving husbands in the funeral fire?'

A verse in the *Uttarakāṇdam* would say that the woes of a widow are far more worse than the woes of losing one's children or of losing one's wife.[31]

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31. மக்கள் இழந்த இடும்பையினும் மனையாள் இழந்த இடும்பையினும் மிக்க இடும்பை வேல்வேந்தே, விதவை இடும்பை என விளம்பித்

Justifying the instantaneous giving up of her life by Kōpperum Dēvi the queen of Pandiyan Neduncheliyan the moment he fell from his throne and breathed his last, the author of *Silappadhi-karam*[32] says that for one who lost her husband no substitute could be pointed out, as for example we can point to a substitute child, a substitute father, a substitute brother etc. In those days, life or the pleasures and values in life ceased for a woman the moment her husband died. The Pandiya Queen who died immediately in this manner was termed to possess *aṛak-kaṛpu,* virtuous or unobtrusive chastity, while Kaṇṇaki, who passed away a long time later after vindicating the innocence of her husband Kōvalan and after avenging his death, is said to possess *maṛak-kaṛpu* a heroic or militant chastity.

Legends and history give us no doubt the stories of many distinguished widows, who did not commit sati but lived a life of austere widowhood.

We have the classic instances of Vijayai, in Cintamani, who was evacuated from the palace by the King, Saccandan when he felt that he was sure to fall in the battle and that she should survive in order to save the child in her womb. She did so, the child survived, and she later led the life of a Jain recluse, a life dedicated to penance.

From the Rāmāyana we see that the three royal queens of King Dasaratha live after him, accompany Bharata into the forest when he goes to fetch Rāmā back to the city, and they are also present at the coronation of Rāmā in the end after the slaying of Rāvaṇa. But the other sixty thousand wives of the king, who had been wedded by him in order to escape the axe of Parasurāma at the rate of one a year for the sixty thousand

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தக்க அதனால் என்கழுத்தில் தாலி நீதந் தருளென்று
தொக்க மணிநீள் முடியானைத் தொழுது பின்னும் இவை சொல்லும்.
—உத்தர காண்டம் திக்குவிசயப்படலம் பாடல் 137.

சிலப்பதிகார உரை மேற்கோள்.

32. *Silappadhikāram* 20: 80-81.

years of his reign, all give up their lives on the king's funeral pyre.

So also we find in the Mahābhārata, when the ruling prince Pāṇḍu dies, his younger wife, Madri, mother of two sons, Nakula and Sahadēva, chooses to die on the funeral pyre of Pāṇḍu, but the senior queen Kunti continues to live as a widow tending her own three sons, besides the two sons of Madri.

Bhutap-Pāṇḍiyan Dēvi

The words of Perumkoppendu, queen of Bhutap-Pāṇḍiyan, admonishing the elders are well known. The story is contained in a verse in *Purananuru.* The king had died and his queen was preparing to immolate herself on his funeral pyre. But the ministers and other elders of the court, probably looking at her tender age and her other responsibilities, try to dissuade her from the act. But she rebukes them saying it does little credit to their age when instead of asking her to go with her husband, they advise her to stay back :

> O ye of wisdom full! O ye of wisdom full!
> Ye of wrong counsel who do not tell me,
> Go, but ask me to desist! Ye men of wisdom!
> We are not of those content to live forlorn
> and feed on the *velai* leaves cooked
> with the white ground sesame and tamarind
> cooked balls of rice, like the white seeds of the melon,
> served on leaves without any ghee,
> and lying on rough stones, without even a mat!
> The pyre's black logs on the burning ground,
> May be terrible indeed for you; but for us,
> Whose broad shouldered spouse has died,
> The pleasant lake with its lotus petals
> Opening, and the fierce fires are one![33]

Here she gives an account of the food and couch which are intended to mortify the flesh of the widow. We should remember

33. *Puranānūṛu* verse 246.

this was 2000 years ago and the name of *sati* was of course unknown in Tamilnad. But yet the royal lady wants to follow her husband, not because of any religious injunction, but only through her own love. She need not do it and her counsellors counsel against it. She castigates them here for their wroug advice.

Another verse in *Purananuru* (256) is the cry of another woman who has lost her husband. She asks the potter to make the burial urn for her deceased husband a little larger, so that she may also be placed therein and buried together. These instances would show how these women were preparing to immolate themselves on the death of their husbands. Such love is seen with a crowned queen and a commoner. Obviously in the two cases, custom does not require them to give up their lives, but they choose to do so.

In a battle between Nedum Seraladan, a Sera King and Poruvirar Killi, a Chola King, at a place called Tirup-Porppuram, says Poet Kazhattalaiyar in a *Purananuru* verse (62), both of them were killed and their women would not eat any food or have any cool bath but mounted the funeral pyre embracing their husbands' bodies. Another poet, Kuttuvan Kiran says that when the chief Ay-Andiran died, his women also gave up their lives with him. These are some of the other instances to show that there were many in that remote period who voluntarily died with their husbands.

A Modern Sati

A woman giving up her life, voluntarily and immediately on the death of her husband is not only not a matter of the past, but is also a matter of the present, as could be seen in real life in the present day. I shall give here one remarkable instance. A long time back I had a *pattikkaran* named Ramaswami who was in general supervising the work of all the farm labourers. His brother was one Krishnan, who was just farming an acre of wet land and was leading a precarious life, doing some odds and ends for the other people and eking out his livelihood

thereby. He had many children and it was difficult for him to maintain the family and give it one square meal a day. His wife was a terrible termagant who was always nagging him for not earning enough to lead a decent life. What was very unusual, was that she used to beat him up severely on occasions. He bore them all stoically, and although he was well built he never used to hit back. When people asked him why he bore it all so meekly, he used to say, "We have lived together for over 50 years. Why should I create more unpleasantness now for her?" There seems to have been a deep love and affection between the two but the world never saw it or heard of it till the very last moment. Of course she used to feed him well and look after his comforts. Once he was ill for sometime; he might have been 75 at the time and his wife 65. He went out in the morning and somewhere on his way back, he just fell down and died. People carried his body home. "Oh my dear husband! He is dead, is he!" she cried, beat on her breasts a few times and immediately fell down and gave up her life. All the people were amazed. Her own behaviour during the years did not permit any one to believe that she could have had that much affection for him whom she always abused and even beat up. Well, there they were, dead, both of them. They were carried together in the same bier and cremated together on the same funeral pyre. Love such as this the world had not witnessed and if ever there was a real sati, this was one.

Queen Sembiyan Mādēvi

In contrast to the words of the Queen of Bhūtap-Pāṇḍiyan, and the self-immolation of two chōḻa queens, the mother of Rāja-rāja and the wife of Rājēndra, we find the great queen Sembiyan mādēvi living in the royal palace as a widow, right through the lives of several Chōḻa crowned monarchs, rearing them up and guiding them in the administration and evolving the entire Chōḻa dynasty as one dedicated to the service of God. She entered the royal Chōḻa house as the wife of Prince Gandarāditta and daughter-in-law of Parāntaka I (907–950 A.D.), Gandaraditta ruled for a short period (950–957) after his father, leaving behind his widow Sembiyan mādēvi and his young son, later to become the Chōḻa

ruler Uttama Chola (970–985). After her husband's death, she was responsible for peace in the country, by temporarily foregoing her son's right to the throne and placing on the throne her husband's brother Arinjayan, who however ruled only for a few months (957). On his death again she did not press her own son's legitimate claims but placed Arinjaya's son, Sundara Chōḻa Parāntaka II (957–970) on the throne. She witnessed his death and the self-immolation of Vānavanmādēvi, queen of Sundara Chōḻa and mother of Rājarāja. Then only did the crown go to her son now crowned as Uttama Chōḻa. When he died, Rāja Rāja ascended the throne (985 A.D.). She was responsible as the grand aunt of the emperor in bringing him up in childhood and also for bringing up Rājarāja's own son who later was crowned as Rājēndra I (1012–1044). Then she had seen seven successive kings of the Chōḻa dynasty on the throne. Her husband was a saintly soul, who had composed one *Tiru Issippa* son in the Nineth Book of the Saiva Canon. She had learnt all pity and devotion to Siva from her husband, who had presumably advised her not to immolate herself on his death but to live as the spiritual guide for the Chōḻa family. Scores of temple constructed by her and benefited by her liberal endowment would bear witness today, to her able guidance of the Chōḻa dynasty on the Saiva path. The life and work of this one lady, Queen Sembiyan mādēvi would show what great good this widowhood of dedication to God could do to posterity. Her abstention from the path of *Sati* has resulted in lasting glory to the Chōḻa dynasty and the nation.

Rāṇi Mangammāḷ (1689–1706) was the widow of Chokkanātha Nāyak of Madurai. She lived as a widow during the reign of her son and then took charge of the administration as the Regent for her grandson. Her many public benefactions such as roads, choultries, tanks and temple renevations are still known to this day by her name and her memory is still fondly cherished by a grateful public.

Tilakavati

Dying with the husband is itself a very noble trait. As stated in the verse quoted earlier (*Puṟapporuḷ Veṇba mālai 262*),

the two lives had become one and death could not part them. In life the husband and the wife were one, and in death also they were one. It should be remembered that in all the cases seen in Tamilnad, the *sati* or immolation was voluntary, born out of a supreme marital love. All glory to the ladies concerned. But there is one remarkable case of a love which transcended the body, which was not even physical love, which was born out of a sense of filial duty and that is found in the Saiva hagiology. The story of St. Appar and his elder sister Tilakavati is well known. Tilakavati was the first child of their parents, Puhalanar and Madiniyar, and Marul Nikkiyar (later to become St. Appar) was the second child. In due time Tilakavati was betrothed to Kalippahai in the usual formal manner. Before the marriage could be performed, there was a general mobilization in the land and at the king's bidding, Kalippahai had to go to the battle front leading a division of forces. Meanwhile, Puhalanar the father had some ailment and died of it. His wife Madiniyar discarded every thing including her children and immediately gave up her life to go up to the heavens with her husband. Even before the sister and brother could recover from this bereavement, news came that Kalippahai died on the battle field. Immediately, Tilakavati resolved to give up her life; she felt that she belonged to Kalippahai the betrothed. because her parents had fixed him up for her, and that she should unite her soul with the departed soul of Kalippahai. The story goes on that her brother fell at her feet saying that as they were also orphaned, he would give up his life if she died, and that she then decided to live, because of her compassion for her brother.[34] The point we would emphasize here is that the young girl decided to give up her life for the sake of Kalippahai, beeause of the decision made by her parents. No marriage had been performed and she was not a wedded wife nor he a husband. Hence her decision reaches the highest pinnacle of glory in the history of sati. It is immaterial that it was not performed: it is enough that she had decided, but that decision was not implemented for other reasons.

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34. *Periyapurāṇam* verses 17-34 of *Tirunāvukkarasarpurāṇam.*

Chola Inscriptions on Sati

A number of inscriptions of the Chola emperors found in the Kannada area refer to the voluntary *sati* performed by many ordinary women. A record of Bonduru (in Mysore) of A. D. 1057 of Rājēndra II says that the king's relative was killed in a wrestling contest; the killer was duly sentenced to be hanged. His wife Dekabbe, the daughter of a chieftain of Nunganad, was determined to perform *sati* although her parents tried to dissuade her in many ways. This is said to be a very fine record in *kavya* style in the Kannada language. Another women is recorded as having performed sati in 1067, in the days of Vīrarājēndra, in the inscription at Pyadharehalli.

In another place called Kebbalakubbe, one Navalasi rajan son of Alahiya Chola died. His widow performed sati. Alahiya Chola thereupon endowed a flower garden for the welfare of the two: recorded in an inscription of the 18th year (1088 A. D.) of Kulottunga I.

This kind of temple endowment for the welfare of the souls of both the deceased people seems to be common in the period. Besides the two instances mentioned above in the Kannada area, we have an inscription of the sixth year of Kulottunga II (1139 A. D.) at Tirukkaḻukkunram where one of the king's relatives killed another captain; the latter's widow committed sati and an endowment of 90 heads of sheep and 31 cows were made to burn lamps for the welfare of the two deceased persons.

An orphan of Pottappalli in Mysore state has gifted land in the year 1067 for earning merit for his deceased father and his mother who committed *sati* - 'She jumped into the fire'.

Another curious inscription of the days of Kulottunga III in 1188 in Tamarappakkam of Kandalurkkutram, Palkunrakottam, Jayamkonda solamandalam (Tondaimandalam) on the banks of the river Seyyar may be noticed here. There was on Pritigangan. a Kuthadum devar, father of Soman Pritigangan. When he died, woman who was a reputed singer there also gave up her life with him. She is said to have 'gone to sleep', *udanpallikondal*

with him. The son Soman gifted one *veli* of land in order to allay the grief of her family aad their loss. This sati of the woman is called *udan pallikolluthal*-going to sleep along with the man. Another similar grant for identical purposes is also noticed there.

As inscription at Elavanasur gives a very curious instance of *sati*. In this temple there are several records of the soldiers of the *Velam* of the king (Vīrarājēndra) who were very firm in their resolve to give up their lives in a state of emergency for their king and declare that if they lived after the death of their King, they should be considered to prostitute their own mother, their own sister, and so on. Along with such records is found one strange declaration by woman in the *Velam* of the king. "If, I, Devapperumal a woman member of the *velam* of Rāja Rāja Malayakularayan Niretra perumal, happen to live after my lord, may I be deemed to be the slave of my cowives giving them food and drink and eating the remnants of their grub. Whoever would say that I ought not to die, shall incur the sin of prostituting his wife. If I do not give up my life, he who does not bind me and throw me into the fire and kill me shall incur the sin of prostituting his wife and of giving her to the servant Kamison who is feeding grass to the horses of my lord." Indeed a very curious declaration! We are to understand from this that she is quite determined about giving up her life but fears that probably at the last moment weakness of the flesh may cause her to desist and so places the duty of throwing her into the fire, in these terms. The *velam* may consist of many women and it is to be concluded that all the women of the *velam* together gave up their lives in this manner.

We hear in the Rāmāyaṇa that the 'sixty thousand wives of King Dasaratha, excepting the three Royal queens, Kausalya, Sumithra, and Kaikeyi gave up their lives on his death. They seem to be on a par with the women of the *velam* who have no separate existence apart from their lord and so die immediately. When Dasaratha died these sixty thousand women fell on his body and made a great lament. Sage Vasishta, who came

there, to make the necessary arrangements, sent them away with the words, 'you may give up your lives in the fire on the day when the funeral rites are performed for the king' and then embalmed the body. The words of Vasishta here obviously are a reflection of the custom of the day (and of the nineth century. King Aditta Chola's (reign) when such a practice of the *velam* of the king was in vogue. Finally we are told that when Satrugna performed the funeral rites for the king, these women gave up their lives in the fire. "To them the fire was cooler than water, their moonlike bright faces handsome like the lotus, they went to the celestial world attained by those who follow their husbands in death."[35]

Chōḷa Queens

There are two very remarkable instances of Chōḷa queens who performed sati. They are Vānavanmādēvi, mother of Rājarāja and Vīramādēvi, queen of Rājēndra, Even earlier in the days of Parāntaka, one Gangamādēviyār wife of Virasola Ilangovelan performed sati on his death. This is recorded in the Allur inscription, in the third year of thc King (910 A.D.).

But the greatest record of such a sati is the classic instance of Vanavanmādēvi, queen of Sundara Chōḷa (957–970) also called Parāntaka II. She was the mother of the great Chōḷa emperor Rājarāja I. The Tiruvalangadu copper plates glorify this incident while the Tirukkovalur inscription describes the same in beautiful poetry:

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35. Kamba Rāmāyaṇam, Ayōdhya Kāṇḍam (S. Rajam Edition) 11:131-132:

இழையும் ஆரமும் இடையும் மின்னிட
குழையும் மாமலர்க் கொம்ப னார்கள் தாம்
தழையில் முண்டகம் தழுவுகானிடை
முழையில் மஞ்ஞைபோல் எரியின் மூழ்கினார்.
அங்கி நீரினும் குளிர அம்புயத்
திங்கள் வான்முகன் திரு விளங்குறச்
சங்கை தீர்ந்து தம் கணவர் பின் செலும்
நங்கை மார்புகும் உலகம் நண்ணினார்.

She was the queen of Sundara Chola,
The Valava with the jewelled crown,
wearing *mnndara* wreaths;
the golden deer that gave birth
To the tiger-likc Sri Rajaraja
Lord of the Goddess of Prosperity;
The equal of Indra, the omniscient Raja-
The lady that dispelled all misfortunes;
The damsel who snatched herself away
From the babe suckling at her breasts,
But never separated from her Lord
even amidst the roaring flames
the eternal self-luminous lamp.[36]

The grandeur of the act, the great sacrifice and the unique tenderness are all caught by the poet in a most feeling and pathetic language. The babe in arms might have been in younger brother or sister of Rājarāja.

Rājēndra the great Chōḷa emperor was the son of Rājarāja and known as Gangai Konda Chōḷa (1012-1044). One of his queens by name Viramādēvi mounted his funeral pyre and this is recorded in an inscription at Brahmadeyam in 1070 in the people of Brahmadeyam to satisfy the thirst of the Emperor Rajendra and his queen Viranmadevi· whose ashes were interned there. Sēnapati Madhurantakar Parakesari Velar brother of Viranmadevi had made this endowment.

Performance of *Sati* (self-immolation was not a regular custom practised in Tamil nad. As indicated in the foregoing instances

36. ...செந்திருமடங்தைமன், சீராச ராசன்,
இந்திர சமானன், இராசசர் வஞ்ஞெனும்
புலியைப் பயந்த பொன் மான், கவியைக்
கரந்து கரவாக் காரிகை, சுரந்த
முலைமலைப் பிரிந்து முழங்கெரி நடுவணும்
தலைமகற் பிரியாத் தையல், நிலைபெறும்
தூண்டா விளக்கு... மணிமுடி வளவன்
சுந்தர சோழன் மந்தர தாரன்
திருப்புய முயங்கும் தேவி.

it was practised by individual widows who gave up their lives on the death of their husbands. This was out of extreme love and not out of any social or family compulsion. However in the later centuries we come across instances of petty princes and chieftains arranging for the mass immolation of their women folk when faced with certain defeat in a battle and consequent capture by the enemy. Vijayaraghava nayak, the last Nayak ruler of Tanjavur, caused the immolation of all his women folk in 1673, when he faced defeat at hands of the Nāyak Ruler of Madurai who was at the gates of Tanjavur. History tells us that Vijayaraghava fell fighting.

Another instance is the case of Oomaitturai, the dumb brother of Kaṭṭabomman. After the exccution of Kaṭṭabomman, Oomai escaped from prison, went back to Pāñchālankuṛichi and rebuilt the fort. Against superior forces he could do nothing. So, putting to the word all the womenfolk, he escaped to Sivaganga on horseback. As the refugees were fleeing the widow of Kaṭṭabomman also accompanied him on horseback but as her tresses were always falling loose and causing obstruction to the progress of the flight of the horses, she was sacrificed on the way and the party rode off.

Sati in the Animal World

The Concept of self-immolation or *sati*hood has been extended in legends and in poetry even to the animal world in our purāṇas and in our literature. In the story of the origins of Sāsta, we find the asura Ramba falling in love with a she-buffalo He lived with the buffalo for sometime. When a real he-buffalo actually attacked Ramba and gored him to death, the she-buffalo gave up its life on the funeral pyre of Rambasura, unable to bear the seperation.

A *Kuṛuntohai* verse in Sangham poetry refers to a monkey's act of self-immolation on the death of a he-monkey. "The male monkey died. The female was unable to bear the loss. Neither was it willing to adopt a life of widowhood, It decided to give up its life. But it had a baby monkey in arms. This baby was

still too young. It had not yet learnt to climb trees etc. and gather its own food. But the mother did not consider this at all. It just handed over its babe to the care of its class, then jumped down from a tall peak and ended its life."[37]

The *aṉṟil* birds live in couples and are proverbial for their inseparability. It is said that when one of the two died the other would not live but would automatically give up its life.

We know the story of the hen-pigeon which committed sati. Pigeons are known to live in pairs of male and female. Adultery is still unusual among them. There was one such pair of pigeons. The male was shot down by a hunter. The female could not bear the grief and so decided to end its life. It swallowed a stomach full of pebbles from the ground then soared up high in the air and closing its wings fell down on hard ground on earth and was dashed to pieces. The ingenuity of the bird in filling up its stomach with pebbles in order to give weight to its body so that it might crash on the earth and bring about death is indeed very remarkable.

When the Wife Dies:

We quoted a verse saying that though the bodies of the husband and wife were different, their souls were only one. The woman who sought to immolate herself on the death of her husband naturally had this philosophy, born out of love and regard for the man. If as is claimed. the love between the two was true and of such a high order, did ever man give up his life on the death of the woman? He did. We shall notice here a few such Instances which though they are not instances of the man dying

37. *Kuṟuntohai* verse:

கருங்கட் டாக்கலை பெரும்பிறி துற்றெனக்
கைம்மை உய்யாக் காமர் மந்தி
கல்லா வன்பறழ் கிளைமுதற் சேர்த்தி
ஓங்குவரை அடுக்கத்துப் பாய்ந்துயிர் செகுக்கும்
சாரல் நாட நடுநாள்
வாரல், வாழியோ, வருந்துதும்யாமே,

for the woman, yet show to us the anguished heart of the man concerned.

Tolkāppiyam has a theme on this subject called the grief of the husband on the death of his wife; it is called *tapu tāra nilai.* Commentators cite here the well known verse from *Puṟanāṉūṟu.* The Sēra ruler, Makkodai, who later died at Kottambalam, uttered these lines (245) when his queen Perumkōppeṇḍu died; "What is any grief worth. though great, when it is not powerful enough to take away my life? My wife died and I have consigned her remains to the fire in the funeral pyre, heaping up fire wood, on the cremation ground, where grow the cactus! She has gone and I live yet. Oh. what life is this?"[38]

The *Veṇba mālai* gives two themes on the same subject, one *suranadai* and the other *tapu tara nilai. Suranadai* (255) is the lament of the lover. As he elopes with his lady love from her place and goes through the arid region which intervenes between her place and his, she dies on the way. He bursts forth with this agonized cry: "O Death, you have taken away by stealth my sweet heart, the innocent damsel who was like a floral wreath on my chest! If only you appear before me in this flaming desert- you will fall a victim to the sharp tongue of my spear".[39] The poignancy of the feeling of the lover is tragically brought out

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38. யாங்குப் பெரிதாயினும் நோயள வெனைத்தே,
உயிர் செகுக் கல்லா மதுகைத் தன்மையிற்
கள்ளி போகிய களரியம் பறந்தலை
வெள்ளிடைப் பொத்திய விளைவிற கீமத்து
ஒள்ளழற் பள்ளிப் பாயற் சேர்த்தி
ஞாங்கர் மாய்ந்தனள் மடந்தை,
இன்னும் வாழ்வல் என்னிதன் பண்பே.

—புறநானூறு, 245.

39. உரவெரி வேய்ந்த உருப்பவிர் கானுள்
வரவெதிரின் வைவேல்வாய் வீழ்வாய்—கரவினுல்
பேதையைப் பெண்ணியலைப் பெய்வளையை என்மார்பிற்
கோதையைக் கொண்டொளித்த கூற்று.

—புறப்பொருள் வெண்பா மாலை 255.

by the epithets the innocent, the sweet, womanly, adorned with bangles, and the wreath on his chest.

The next verse (256) on the older theme, *tapu tara nilai,* speaking about the bereaved state of the husband in the home after his wife had passed away: "Let my ears become deaf so that they may not hear the really bereaved condition of my lord, hero and benefactor who is immersed in grief on his wife's going to the heavens."[40]

Daṇḍi alankāram also gives a fine verse on this subject. He is at the cremation ground. Fire is being applied to her funeral pyre; he cries out: "She was so tender, she could not bear the burden of even a few flowers on her hair. Oh, how will her fragile frame bear this funeral fire!"[41]

The mostly widely known anecdote on this subject of a man's grief on the death of his wife is the legendary story of Tiruvaḷḷuvar, author of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. Vāsuki, his wife, the gem of Indian womanhood passed away. Tiruvaḷḷuvar recalls all that she had been to him in life and now laments. "My love, giver of sweet food, you never disobeyed my slightest wish. You went to bed after me and rose up before me. Alas! now you are going. How shall my eyelids close hereafter at night fall!"[42]

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40. பைங்தொடி மேலுலகம் எய்தப் படருழந்த
மைந்தன் குரிசில் மழைவள்ளல்—எந்தை
தபுதாரம் தாழ்ந்த தனிநிலைமை கேளாச்
செவிடா யொழிக என்செவி.

—புறப்பொருள் வெண்பா மாலை 256.

41. கழல்சேர்ந்த தாள்விடலை காதலிமெய் தீண்டும்
அழல் சேர்ந்து தன்னெஞ் சயர்ந்தான்—குழல்சேர்ந்த
தாமந் தரியா தசையுந் தளிர்மேனி
ஈமந் தரிக்குமோ என்று.

—தண்டியலங்காரம் மேற்கோள் சூ 70,

42. அடிசிற் கினியாளை அன்புடையாளைப்
படுசொற் பழிநாணு வாளை அடிவருடிப்
பின்தூங்கி முன்னுணரும் பேதையை யான் பிரிந்தால்
என்தூங்கும் கண்கள் எனக்கு.

—தொல்காப்பியம் பொருளதிகாரம் 153.
நச்சினார்க்கினியர் உரை மேற்கோள்,

Extreme grief and anguish on the death of the wife is not a mere matter of the past. There are many cases of men attempting to end their lives on the death of their wives. There was recently the case of such an anguished man of Bilaspur in 1964 who plunged into the funeral pyre of his beloved wife. His conjugal devotion was such that life was not worth living for him after her death. Such extreme cases are however rare.

Poets and Patrons

We have many instances of poets and their close friendship with their patrons. Kapilar one of the most celebrated of the Sangham poets and his friendship for Pāri are well known. On the death of his friend Pāri, Kapilar took charge of his two daughters and failing to get them wedded suitably, left them in the care of some brahmins and then gave up his life. The story of Pisirāndaiyār is equally well known. This poet's patron was the King Kōpperunchōḻan. On hearing of his death, he gave up his life immediately by the practice of *Vadakkiruttal.* Pottivar was an other poet friend of the Chōḻa. When he went and expressed to the king his desire to die with him, the king sent him back saying, "Beget children to continue your progeny and then come." When the poet went to him later the king had already died and a herostone had been planted for him. He asked the stone to move aside and make room. The stone did! Then he also gave up his life by the process of *Vadakkiruttal.*[43]

There is a late and poignant story of a poet giving up his life on the funeral pyre of his friend and patron in the 13th century. Poyyāmoḻi was a famous poet of this period who had sung the well known minor poem *Tanjai Vnṇaṇkōvai,* all the verses of which serve as illustrations for the several themes of the Ahapporuḷ manual, *Nambi Ahapporuḷ Viḷakkam.* Sinakkan was the friend and patron of Poyyā Moḻi. The two were quite intimate friends and an incident in their lives is analogous to the story of the arrival of Duryōdhana when Karṇa and Duryōdhana's wife were playing chess.

43. Vide Puṛanāṉūṛu verses 220-223.

8184

One day the poet came at a late hour to the house of his friend and finding him absent laid himself down on the bed spread there. Sinakkan's wife came into the room, saw the sleeping man, and in the dim light, thinking him to be her own husband, laid herself down by the side of the sleeping form, A little later Sinakkan himself returned and seeing the two sleeping forms, he rightly assessed the situation. No bad thoughts or suspicion entered his mind. Just muttering "Give me also a little room to lie down", he laid himself down on the edge of the bed and slept. When the poet woke up at day break he saw the two sleeping forms beside him. He also very rightly understood the situation. Great was his amazement and delight that his friend did not think any thing wrong at finding his own wife and his friend sleeping on the same bed. Years passed. News came to the poet who was elsewhere that his friend Sinakkan had died. Immediately he rushed to the friend's place and finding that the body had been taken to the cremation ground by that time, he ran there. Finding that the body had been actually placed on the funeral pyre, and the funeral fire had already been lit, he said, "Sinakka, my friend and patron, the other day you just said, 'make room for me also to lie down'. But now, you have ascended the heavens along with your wife. Give me also room", ascended the pyre and gave up his life in the flames.[44]

From the words of the poet we learn that Sinakkan's wife had already mounted the funeral pyre and given up her life after her husband and that the poet is now giving up his life out of his friendship for his friend.

We have again another rare story of a ruler giving up his life on the death of his friend. Kumara dhatusena was ruler of

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44 அன்று நீ செல்லக் கிட என்ருய், ஆருயிர் விட்டு
இன்று நீ வானுலகம் எய்திஞய்—வென்றி திகழ்
மாநக்க பூண் முலையார் மாரனே, தென்னசுரர்ச்
சீநக்கா செல்லக் கிட.

—பெரும்தொகை 1458.

Sri Lanka in 515-24. His close friend was Kāḷidāsa, son of his minister Moggallanan. When Kāḷidāsa died, Kumara is said to have also died on the funeral pyre of his friend.

Some of these stories of Sinakka and Poyyāmoḻi and Kāḷidāsa and Kumara remind us of the performance of sati by wives.

In this context we would like to draw attention to one legend in Moghul history. Humāyūn the son of Bāber was down with a dire disease. The loving father prayed to God to take away his own life and spare his son's life. History would say that this indeed came to pass. A story in the Vaishnava Guruparampara, where Maṟavan nambi took over a virulent disease of his master in order that the master might be healthy to carry on his Vaishṇava mission may also be recalled here.

Sumangali Prārthana

A woman living as a widow after the death of her husband had not been looked upon with favour by society. But on the other hand, a woman pre-deceasing her husband was glorified beyond measure and even deified. The *sumangali prārthana,* a kindy celebration in honour of such pre-deceased women in every family, just on the event of any marriage occasion, will testify to this fact. The memory of such women was recalled on this occasion and they were worshipped as the guardian angels of the family, capable of looking after the welfare of the prospective couple and of giving them long life.

There is an interesting incident about a brahmin woman who performed sati in Koranad. Mayuram, one hundred years back. When her whole body and clothes were burnt by the fire in the funeral pyre. it was found, by those who collected the unburnt bones the next day for being consigned to sacred waters, that her *kosavam,* the thick folds of the *sari* tucked at her waist, was unscorched. Every one was amazed. Her family members took it out, placed it in a new earthern pot and performed deiva puja for it on every anniversary day as a *sumangali prārthana.* The old unburnt portion was there along with her *saris,* which were renewed year after year, the old ones being taken out and

worn. But the unburnt fragment was always there. This practice is said to be still going on in the family. The *saris* so kept in mud-pots for one year till the next anniversary day are not attacked by moths or worms. The *prārthana* shows the great glory attaching to the death of a woman as a *sumangali,* pre-deceasing her husband. Where she could not die earlier in a natural manner, she died voluntarily by sati on her husband's death and is given even greater respect.

Conclusion

To conclude. Married life was the ideal. Survival on the death of the husband was not a very happy state for any woman. Widowhood was not looked upon with favour although there have been eminent widows who had carved out a glorious life for themselves by selfless service to the nation. Women who died before their husbands were celebrated in later times as guardian angels of the family and special worship offered to them as worship of the *veeṭṭu deivam* or as *sumangali prārthanai,* still observed in the different communities in Tamilnad. A woman who gave up her life on the death of her husband in a natural manner was held in great veneration. But where she could not give up her life in a natural manner, she resorted to *sati* out of excessive and unbearable grief. *Sati* as such did exist of course and the women who committed sati were glorified. Though common it was voluntary and never compulsory: and it was not universal. Woman was always under protection as in her maidenhood even in the married state under her husband, and when she was no more she exercised self control over her mind, did not meet outsiders, and offered worship to no God but her own husband. The *Kuṛaḷ* does not say anything on this subject. Women of all classes were expected to lead a life of religious devotion. The *Sati* in Tamil and was an exception and not the rule. No where have we heard of a woman forced into *sati* against her will in Tamilnad.

Still we find an instance of compulsory *sati* in the 19th century. A tract on the Maṛavar of Sivagangai lays down that

all the wives duly wedded to Sētupati Udayathēvar of the Sembiya-nād Maṛavar clan shall enter the fire along with the (body of the) husband. The term used here is *agnipravēsam.* This is of course a case of *compulsory sati,* imposed by order of the ruler.

But there are yet cases of young women who voluntarily give up their lives as *sati,* out of a sense of deep love and affection and consequent grief on the death of the husband. Stories of great *pativratas* which they had read or had heard of had instilled in them a desire to emulate such heroic women in the past. That this is not a mere matter of the past can be seen from several such cases which are being reported in our newspapers occasionally. All such cases are not reported. The following news item which appeared in the *Hindu* dated July 14th 1979 is given here without comment.

Newly wed Bride Commits 'sati'. Banda (U. P.) July 13: A 17 year-old newly wedded bride Javitri, committed 'sati' at the funeral pyre of her husband. Ramakant Tewari, a third-year Engineering student, who was shot dead along with his younger brother by a gang of dacoits on Monday night in Jari Village, 10 k. m. from here. While the arrangements for the cremation of the two brothers were being made by the relations, Javitri made known her decision to consign herself to the flames along with her husband. Soon after the body of Ramakant was kept on the fire, Javitri reached the cremation ground, got herself seated at the fire with her husband's head in her lap and asked the fire to be lit. When repeated requests to Javitri to change her decision failed, the fire was lit and her body was consumed in the flames along with her husband-PTI".

We may conclude this short dissertation on sati with the words of Sarōjini Naidu; "Sati is to be condemned but if performed in love and regret for the beloved it is heroic. But do men of our days deserve sati? They are not men at all. They can be called degenerated descendants of ancient heroes".

THE GENESIS AND GROWTH OF THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT IN KERALA (1857-1947)

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Buddhism and Jainism had made inroads into the social fabric of Kerala from very ancient days, yet the highly civilized Dravidian Society which was a classless and casteless one, continued as such until the Aryanization of Kerala. While the pre-Aryan, Dravidian Society presented a picture of complete social harmony Aryans brought about a society based on Chaturvarnya. The creation of social compartments thus brought into being a peculiar social milieu wherein a Hindu's approach near another Hindu was strictly conditioned by the superior-inferior relation of each, in the caste hierarchy.

Side by side with the stratification of the society into mutually excluding antagonistic groups such as the higher castes (*Savarnas*) and the lower castes (*Avarnas*) the only combining force which emotionally united the people of Kerala was their mother-tongue viz. Malayalam. Primitive Tamil was the ancient Dravidian language of the people of South India and in the course of a few centuries, this original language was subjected to various social, regional and historical influences which resulted in the creation of four separate regional languages viz. Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada.[1] The advent of Aryans into Kerala and the consequent process of synthesis of Aryanism with Dravidianism contributed for the rise of Malayalam as a distinct language around 9th century A.D. The influence of Sanskrit over Tamil and subsequent linquistic formations shaped modern Malayalam,

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1. Elias Valentine, "Kerala-Land, People And Language", *First World Conference on Malayalam, Kerala Culture And Development* (hereinafter FWCMKC) Souvenir, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 30.

which in turn promoted national and emotional integration of the Indian Society which was at cross roads in the 19th century. A comprehensive literary history of Kerala should take into account the literary prices produced in the region, not only in Malayalam language, but also in Tamil from 4th century B.C. to first millenium A.D.[2] The contribution of Kerala to Tamil literature should perhaps find its proper place in the history of Tamil literature exactly in the same way as Kerala's contribution to Sanskrit, (for example, works of high literary value like those of Sankaracharya (788-820) the great Advaita Philosopher and Kulasekhara Alwar, the royal dramatist) should come within a history of Sanskrit literature. The contribution of Keralites to English, Hindi and other languages also, thus form part of the literatures in those languages.[3] Since the present paper deals only with the developments of a century preceding national independence, details about the growth of Malayalam literature in the pre-modern period is outside our scope here.

Early Modern Malayalam

By the middle of the 19th century, the impact of the new type of education began to be felt in Kerala. The introduction of western education and later conversion of the medium of instruction into vernacular languages necessitated text books in the regional languages. The opening of new schools in various parts of the country resulted in the production of translations of well-known classics from Sanskrit into Malayalam. There were poets who deliberately composed poems in simple and lucid Malayalam incorporating Sanskrit elements.[4] During this period, the influence of Sanskrit was deep rooted and that of English vast and varied. Kerala Varma (1845-1915) and his nephew Rajaraja Varma (1863-1918) were the leaders who accelerated a great resurgence in literature, both in poetry and prose. Several

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2. K. Ayyappa Paniker, *A Short History of Malayalam Literature*, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum; 1978, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. K. M. George, "Malayalam Literature Through the Ages", *FMCWKS*, p. 40.

works in the form of Mahakavyas, novels, essays and biographies rapidified the pace towards the emotional awakening of the people. The establishment of colleges for imparting English education, the translation of the Bible and other religious works, the formation of the text book committee, the growth of printing presses, the starting of newspapers and periodicals, the introduction of science and technology, the beginning of industrialisation, the awakening among social and political groups etc. constituted the giant strides towards modernization of Kerala.[5]

The last quarter of the 19th century saw the birth of Malayalam novel, a medium for imaginative literary communication. Such portraiture was similar to the conditions of Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. The novel in Malayalam received a fillip by the publication of *Indulekha* (1889) by O. Chandu Menon. It is a social novel relating to the two predominant Savarnas of Kerala namely Nairs and Namboothiries, between whom there existed a peculiar matrimonial relationship.[6] C. V. Raman Pillai's historical novels like *Martanda Varma* (1891), and *Dharma Raja* (1912) disclosed the intricacies of human life, both on the socio-political plane and on the psychological plane.[7] Many novels came to be written by others but most of them were mere imitations of the masterpieces produced by the two great masters.

The golden period of modern Malayalam poetry is the second and third decade of the 20th Century. Three great poets usually referred to as "the great two", viz., Kumaran Asan (1873-1924), Vallathol Narayana Menon (1877-1958) and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer (1877-1949) were responsible for this great rejuvenation. They produced exquisite poetry bearing on social, political, economic and cultural themes. Kumaran Asan came under the influence of Sri. Narayana Guru who believed in one caste, one

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5. K. Ayyappa Panicker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47; P. K. Parameswaran Nair, *Adhunika Malayalam Sahityam* (Mal.) NBS, Kottayam, 1968, pp. 206-208.
6. P. K. Parameswaran Nair, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 209-226.
7. *Ibid.*

religion and one God.[8] This poet legislator complained on the floor of the popular Assembly of Travancore in 1914, about the miserable plight of the down-trodden communities. He decried through his poems the caste restrictions and untouchability and was much grieved about the social and political serfdom of India. He felt that caste was a curse on humanity and seriously saw this cancerous growth on the Hindu conception of Society.[9] *Duravastha* (1923), *Chandalabhikshuki* (1923) and other poems caused a great stir in contemporary. Society and melted the conservative savarna mind and brought about a radical change in the social outlook. ASAN's masterpiece is perhaps *Karuna* (1924), the last of his major poems, wherein he passes on from social reconstruction to a universal theme touching the deeper aspects of life. Having worked for a long period as General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, Asan had ample opportunities to get acquinted with the social life of Kerala at close quarters.[10] His awareness of the disabilities rampant in Kerala Society made him raise his voice against caste barriers and campaign vigorously for the social revolution of Kerala.[11]

Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, who vastly enriched Malayalam literature and by his writings helped to fan the flame of nationalism in India,[12] produced several lyrics bearing on social uplift and the oneness of humanity. The pitiable sight of a Pulaya Girl with a heavy grass bundle on her head made him think that her social position was beneath even that of grass. His poems are of little political import but their social content exercised a great amount of influence on his generation.[13]

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8. P. K. K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1972, Vol. II, p. 520.
9. T. K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society. Trivandrum, 1972. pp. 18–19.
10. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, NES, Kottayam, 1967, p. 404.
11. T. K. Ravindran, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 72–73.
12. T. C. Sankara Menon, "Ulloor S. P. Iyer", *Dictionary of National Biography* (Ed. S. P. Sen), IHS, Calcutta, 1974, Vol. II. pp. 217–18.
13. P. K. K. Menon, *Op. Cit*, pp. 520–21.

His *Umakeralam* is accepted by all as a Mahakavya on Kerala history, His *Annum Innum* (Then and Now) even excelled many of his classical works. In the latter poem he exhorted the people of India thus, "India will become the Paradise, it was once, O Indians, if we are pure in body and mind, lift ourselves through hard work".[14] Vallathol Narayana Menon, popularly known as Vallathol, was the most towering figure in the 20th Century. He was a versatile poet, the "classicist", the progressivist and the nationalist rolled into one.[15] Patriotic and nationalist fervour, then surging up in the Indian sub-continent under Gandhian leadership found forceful poetic expression in Vallathol's lyrics, providing the emotional background to the Satyagrahis in their struggle. His "*Pora, Pora*" (Not enough, not enough) song on the tricolour flag is only one of the many poems that gave strength faith and hope to the freedom fighters. National consciousness set afloat by the Indian National Congress and men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale and Tilak gave a contemporary relevence to his poems extolling India's past glory. Just as India's spiritual renaissance had expressed itself in regional languages through Namadeva, Kabir and other great men, so too her national sentiment and love of freedom came to be reflected mainly through our great poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Bharathi and Vallathol. Vallathol sang the glory of the charka which he looked upon as Sri. Charka itself that would drive away poverty. The popularity of his poem on Gandhiji entitled "*Ente Gurunathan*" (My Master) is unrivalled.[16] In many of his poems he exhorts the people to wear Khaddar, boycott foreign cloth and liquor shops, wipe out the shame of the caste system from our society and build Hindu Muslim Unity as the bulwark of our Country's freedom.[17]

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14. K. Ayyappa Panicker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 70.

15. K. M. Panicker, *Vallathol-a Centenary Perspectivc*, The Macmillan Company, Madras, 1978, p. 111.

16. P. K. K. Menon, *Op. Cit.*, p. 522.

17. M. S. Devadas, *Vallathol-a Centenary Perspective*, p. 22.

Asan, Ulloor and Vallathol were no doubt drawn from different Castes, but they were alike Keralaputras and they were equally among the most gifted children of Mother India. This great trio of Malayalam literature contributed considerably for the resurgence of India exactly in the same way as Tagore in Bengal, Keshavasut in Maharashtra and Subramania Bharati in Tamilnadu. Short stories in Hindi and Urdu, especially the works of Premchand and the poetry of Josh are significant contributions. Similar is the case with Marathy, Gujarathi, Tamil, Canarese and Malayalam. Briefly the expression of the spirit of the Indian people has been almost exclusively spread through regional languages which have been transformed during the last half a century or more into great vehicles of creative thought. It is not in the few works produced by Indians in English poems, plays, novels and essays that we can see the representative expression of the Indian mind. The great literary figures of Indian languages represent the mind of resurgent modern India.

Kerala Society at Cross Roads:

Of the foreigners who were atrracted by the prospects of spice trade including the Portuguese, the Danes and the Dutch, the English alone were destined to establish their paramountcy and influence over the land. The second half of the 18th Century was a critical period in the history of south India. Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan resisted the growth of British power in the far south. The chaotic conditions created on the Kerala Coast by internal strife mutual rivalries between local rulers, intrigues by the European powers etc. had given an opportunity to Mysore to interest herself actively in Kerala Politics. When the Mysoreans came, there were only three important political powers in Kerala viz the Zamorin of Calicut, the Rajas of Cochin and Travancore. But as a result of the centralizing policies of Martanda Varma,[18] Maha Raja of Travancore (1929-58), Rama Varma Saktan Tampuran (1790-1805) of Cochin and the shock of the Mysorean invasions, the caste ridden social structure of Kerala started

18. A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Rice of Travancore—Life and Times of Marthanda Varma*, Kerala Historical Society; Trivandrum, 1977, pp. 1-4.

tottering to its very foundations towards the close of the 18th Century. Further the native revolts[19] of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Malabar (1972–1805), Velu Tampi Dewan of Travancore (1808–09) Paliat Achen, Dewan of Cochin (1809), the Kurichya revolt of Wynad[20] (1812) etc. accelerated the pace towards a new order of things.

After the suppression of these revolts, the British Residents began to meddle with state matters as if they were introducing reforms for the betterment of the hitherto suppressed sections of the society. Even during this period of English administration, there operated various pressure groups led by the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Nayars, who constituted the high castes. This landed aristocracy enjoyed various rights, privileges and concessions at the hands of the ruled and the rulers. The so called lower strata of the Hindu Society, commonly called the *Avarnas* and to a large extent the Christians and Muslims were subjected to, as in other parts of India, numerous disabilities on account of peculiar social customs and religious practices observed from times immemorial.[21] In those days the social conditions of Kerala were obnoxious. The caste system was so deep rooted that people were divided into innumerable castes and sub-castes, each in close endogamic group with taboos of untouchability, unapproachability and even unseeability. Right of way was decided by one's caste in the case of Hindus here. Higher castes shunned the lower castes because they believed that their touch or approach or even sight within a certain distance caused pollution to them. This state of affairs led to conscious attempts to prevent the outcastes from entering roads, schools, offices and other public places.[22] Thus distance pollution for a Brahmin was 64 ft. from a Paraya,

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19. T. P. Sankarankutty Nair, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1977, pp. 1 to 20 and 60 to 85.
20. T. K. Ravindran, "The Kurichya Rebellion of 1812" *J, of Kerala Studies*, Dec. 1976, pp. 533-44.
21. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Op. Cit*, pp. 379-81.
22. T. K. Ravindran, "Consequences of Unapproachability in Travancore", *The Bulletin of the Institute of Traditiohal Culture*, Madras, Dec, 75, pp. 39-41.

54 ft. from a Pulaya and 30 ft. from a Thiyya or Ezhava. Among lower castes also distance pollution was observed. A Panan or Malayan may approach but not touch a Tiyyan, but a Pulayan must not even approach a Panan.[23] Pollution was observed even between the different sub-castes within the Brahmin community. A Tamil Brahmin by touch caused pollution to a Nambudiri and a Nayar to the Brahmin. Untouchability and other disabilities were applicable only in the case of *Avarnas*. They suffered these disabilities just because they were loyal Hindus. Paradoxically enough, the moment they left Hinduism and embraced Islam or Christianity, their stigma was removed and they in their new religious status, were free to move along the same roads which were once closed for them because of adherence to Hinduism. The economic system was feudal and oppressive to the maximum. *Avarnas* and Mappilas or Muslims were taxed heavily whereas the upper castes were exempted from the payment of land tax. The holding of umbrellas was prohibited to all castes except the Brahmins, though the rain were pouring upon them. Social exclusiveness of outcastes also prevented intermarriages and interdining. Some of the social customs like Talikettu marriage, (the marriage ceremony of tying tali) Tirandukuli (the ceremony performed when a girl attains puberty) etc. impoverished many of these social groups, both Avarnas and Savarnas. Agrarian relations and other economic problems also necessitated drastic socio-economic changes in Kerala during the period.

The spiritual halo :

The impact of western education was the great reality in Indian national life even from the last quarter of the 18th century. The ever increasing political and social consciousness of the elite Indians transformed medieval India into modern India. Indian social and religious spheres underwent fundamental changes primarily because of the efforts made by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sree Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswathi etc. In Kerala also there was a similar religious

23. J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, Oxford Press, Bombay, 1969, pp. 79-83.

awakening piloted by Sri Chattambi Swamikal (1854-1924) and Sree Narayana Guru (1857-1928). Their revolutionary interpretation of the philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads effected basic changes in the outlook of the people. Born as a member of the Nayar community Chattambi Swamikal was a celebrated mystic and scholar. He was aptly called Vidyadhiraja, the King of knowledge.[24] He sowed the seeds of social revolution in Kerala at a time when the Brahmins were monopolising all fields of activity. One of his books *Vedadhikaranirupanam* challenged the monopoly of the Brahmins in the study and practice of Vedic knowledge and their domination of the cultural and spiritual life of the age. His speeches and books helped the lower castes to revive their self-respect as the inheritors of a great culture. First as a member of the Nair Community, he liberated himself from the psychological submission to the Brahmins. It was Kunjan Pillai Chattambi, who asked his pupil and bosom friend Nanu Asan or Narayana Guru to take initiative for the uplift of the Ezhavas.[25] After his efforts at internal reforms of the Nairs, he impressed upon his men the absurdity and meaninglessness of the caste system by taking food from the *Avarnas*. He wanted the major Hindu social groups like the Nairs and the Ezhavas to play their legitimate role in the social reformation of Kerala.

Sree Narayana Guru, an Ezhava savant and seer, an exemplary model of human compassion totally detached from desires and ambitions revolted against the dominance of the Brahmin priesthood and struggled hard for the mitigation of the rigours of caste. After a period of prolonged meditation Sree Narayanan broke the religious monopoly of the Brahmins by installing a Siva idol at a place called Aruvippuram in Trivandrum (1888) subscribing to the Advaita philosophy of Shri Sankara, Narayana

24. Parur K. Gopala Pillai, *Sree Chattampi Swamy Thiravatikal* (Mal.) Ramanuja Press, Trichur, 1110 ME, Passim. Also see K. Maheswaran Nair, *Sree Narayanante Guru* (Mal.), Vidyadhiraja Academy, Trivandrum, 1974, Passim.

25. *Ibid.* Also see *N.S.S. Golden Book*, Changanassery, 1964, pp 506-8.

Guru carried it to a logical conclusion. His simple and succinct message of "one caste, one religion and one God for man" was the result of his reinterpretation of Sankara Advaita.[26] The installation of idol at Aruvippuram by an untouchable man infuriated the orthodox Brahmins and they questioned the propriety of this *Avarna* for which Sri Narayanan answered that the deity consecrated was "an Ezhava Siva and not a Brahmin Siva." The hollowness of caste distinctions was revealed and the meaningless pride of the Brahmins was shattered by this sober reply of that harbinger of social reform movement in Kerala.[27] In order to eradicate the cultural backwardness of the Ezhavas, he appealed to them to get themselves educated. For the social, political, spiritual and economic uplift of Ezhavas, Narayana Guru thought reorganising the Aruvippuram temple committe into an organisation of the Ezhavas.[28] Thus a silent revolution was set in motion by him and on account of the special and peculiar needs of this land, his socio-religious movement appeared almost an indoor affair.[29]

Side by side with the activities of Chattambi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru, another Keralite also piloted the social reform movement in Kerala, through constitutional lines by submitting memorial to the Travancore Government. G. Parameswaran Pillai, popularly known as G. P. Pillai (1864–1903) is definitely one of the pioneer builders of modern Kerala. His ceaseless constitutional agitation roused the dormant consciousness of the people to sense their inherent rights and claims. He through his articles, pamphlets, speeches and campaigns convinced the government that the voice of the people was a power to be reckoned with. "An

26. M. K. Sanoo, *Narayana Guru,* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1978 passim especially Foreword by K. K. Viswanathan.

27. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, "Sri Narayana Guru", *Indian History Congress Souvenir,* Calicut, 1976, pp. 51–54.

28. G. Rajendran, The *Ezhuva Community* and *Kerala Politics,* The Kerala Academy of Political Science, Trivandrum, 1974, p. 31. Also see M. K. Sanoo *Op. Cit.* p–75.

29. T. K. Ravindran, *Asan,* Op. Cit. p. ii.

open letter to Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras" in 1887 exposing the maladministration of the state by G. P. created a stir all over South India.[30] His pamphlet "*Travancore for Travancoreans*" was a scathing exposure of the Rao ridden society of Travancore (1817-1872). With the assistance of natives and friends in Madras, G. P. drafted in 1891, the famous *Travancore Memorial,* a monstrous petition signed by over ten thousand natives to impress upon the crown, "the denial to the Travancoreans of a fair share in the Government of their country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of its service". The submission of this Memorial was an epoch making event in the history of Travancore and this won for him the title the father of political agitation in Travancore.[31] Again it was he who for the first time urged the claims of the Ezhavas in Travancore for better treatment. His ardent spirit revolted against the unjust treatment meted out to the Ezhavas who formed a large section of the Hindu population.[32] When G. P. went to England in 1897, he availed himself of the opportunity to see that the disabilities of the Ezhavas were brought to the notice of the British Parliament.[33] His trenchant editorials in *The Madras Standard* and other newspapers contributed not a little for the social and political awakening of the people of Kerala. His correspondence with William Wedderburn, R.C. Dutt, M. G. Ranade, A. M. Bose, P. C. Ray, Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Gandhiji bear testimony to his stature as an important Indian leader of those days, along with Sir. C. Sankaran Nair (1857-1934) the President of the Amraoti session of the Indian National Congress (1897). Unlike Dr. P. Palpu, G. P. worked not only for his community but also for his country.

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30. G. P. Sekhar, *G. P. Centenary Sovenir*, Trivandrum, 1964, pp-180-182:

31. T. P. Sankarankutty Nair, "G. P. Pillai - Father of Political Agitation in Travancore", *Indian History Congress Proceedings* Calicut session, 1976 - pp. 354-60.

32. G. P. Pillai, Editorial, *The Madras Standard*, 28-1-1891.

33. *The Madras Standard,* Madras dated, 11th August, 1897,

A significant difference between Kerala and the rest of India consists in the fact that the first form of political agitation was begun by organisations of particular castes, sub-castes and religious communities. Tamil Brahmin domination was resented to by the rest of the Kerala society and was piloted by G. P. Pillai as we have seen. The discontentment of non-caste Hindus found expression in individual petitions to the Maharaja followed by collective action by some of the backward Hindu communities, as in the case of the Ezhava Memorial of 1896, submitted by Dr. Palpu (1863-1950) and other 13175 Ezhavas of Kerala.[34] The relatively forward community of Nairs had some grievances in the Brahmin dominated state. They too gave expression to their resentment. All these agitations and movements led to the formation of caste organisations with definite political and social demands formulated from their platforms. As a matter of fact, these caste based organisations were in their outward form social reform organisations rather than political parties.[35] The most widespread and most powerful of them is the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* which gave voice to the grievances and demands of the non-caste Hindu community of Ezhavas. This organisation was in its outward form a religio-social organisation inspired and led by the saintly Narayana Guru, thus combining in the same organization, elements of Ram Mohan's Brahmo, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda's spiritualism, Jyothiba Phule's revolt of the untouchable classes of Maharastra.[36] In the same period other important communal organisations also sprang up like the *Nair Service Society* of Mannath Padmanabha Pillai (1878-1970), The *Yogakshema Sabha, The Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha, The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham* of Ayyankali (1863-1941), *The Adima Mahajana Sabha* etc.

After the submission of the Travancore Memorial (1891) and the Ezhava Memorial (1896) leaders of various castes and

34. T. K. Madhavan, *Dr. Palpu* (Mal, Biography), Alleppey, 1969, p. 129.

35. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development with special Reference to Kerala "*FWCMKC*", History section, pp. 18-35.

36. *Ibid.*

communities of Kerala began to think consciously for the uplift of their castemen following the precepts of the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. From the closing years of the 19th century to the year of Indian independence there was keen competition among these communal units to get maximum benefit for their caste. The recognition of social equality seemed to be the most outstanding demand of the Avarnas of Kerala. The age old practices like *Makkathayam* and *Marumakkathayam* systems of inheritance (by the former system law of succession and inheritance was through male line from father to son whereas under the latter system inheritance was through female line from uncle to nephew) untouchability, unapproachability etc. created many acute problems among various communal groups.

The disabilities of the Ezhavas

The eradication of the social evils of untouchability and unapproachability attracted the attention of all social leaders during this period including some of the Savarnas like Swadesabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai (1878-1916) and Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai (1877-1940). None at that time even dreamt of the question of temple entry. But many of them demanded only privileges and rights enjoyed by Christians and Musiims at that time. Dr. P. Palpu, an Ezhava medical graduate of Trivandrum was refused entry to Travancore Government service because of his low position in the caste hierarchy. This personal humiliation prompted Palpu to take up arms against the existing Savarna domination amply perpetuated by the Government. In 1892 he was able to acquaint himself with Swami Vivekananda about the grievances of the Ezhava community a community which form 16.2% of the total population of Travancore and 22 05% of the Hindu population. In 1891 there is not a single representative of this community holding any Government appointment on Rs. 5/- a month or more in the state.[37] His frequent petitions to the Dewan, the British Resident, the Maharaja of Travancore etc. bore no fruitful results upon which he drafted

37. *The Travancore Memorial, Trivandrum,* 1891, para 5.

the famous Ezhava Memorial, signed by over 13175 Ezhavas. The publication of the pamphlet *"Treatment of Tiyyas in Travancore"* made the Ezhavas of Kerala conscious of their grievances. Dr. Palpu wrote a letter to C.W.E. Cotton, the then Resident in Travancore about the new organization which he founded. "I started work individually and gradually organised an association and registered it under the name of the *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* with the Swami (Sree Narayana Guru) of the caste as its permanent president to improve the religious, social, educational and industrial conditions of the community".[38] It was Swami Vivekananda's advice to continue the struggle for the Ezhava uplift with a spiritual leader as the guiding force that made Dr. Palpu to raise Sri. Narayana Guru as the spiritual head of the S.N.D.P.[39] Swami Vivekananda's influence compelled the leaders of the S.N.D.P. to name their organ as *Vivekodayam*. The Aruvippuram Temple Association was the nucleus of the S.N.D.P. Yogam which was registered as a Joint Stock Company in March 1903.

Kumaran Asan, the poet legislator plunged into hectic activities connected with the Yogam and he was its General Secretary for the next 16 years. Asan received invaluable help from Dr. Palpu at Bangalore and Madras as a result of the humanitarian attitude of the Doctor. Narayana Guru Swami came to have great regard and respect for Dr. Palpu.[40] In fact Dr. Palpu enjoyed an equal status with Sree Narayana Guru in almost all Ezhava meetings. The S.N.D.P. Yogam, the congress of the Ezhavas of Kerala was thus the outcome of the work of a saint, a Doctor and a poet taken together. The idealistic passivity of the Guru was translated into pragmatic activity by

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38. Dr. P. Palpu's letter to Resident CWE Cotton, dated 30 June 1927. Papers preserved by his grandson Shri. A. Siddharthan and now deposited in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 15 (Unclassified).

39. Dr. Palpu Papers, Nehru Museum, New Delhi, Also See T. K. Madhavan, *Op. Cit.* p. 195.

40. M. K. Sanoo, *Op. Cit*, p. 73.

the poet-legislator.[41] It must be said to the credit of Asan that he was able to create an atmosphere of cordial sympathy for the cause of the backward classes. Dr. Palpu, the soul of the S.N.D.P., could not always come down to Kerala from Mysore State and naturally Kumaran Asan was entrusted with the organisational work. He rendered yeoman service to the community by convening meetings, enrolling members and making representations to the government on the grievances of the community. During this period organised attempts were made by the Yogam to combat social evils like untouchability and prohibition of the lower castes to the schools, public offices, courts and temples.[42]

The Nambudiris, who occupies the top most position in the Hindu Society, was also not free from the shackles of tradition. Some of the progressive Nambudiris organised, The *Yogakshema Mahasabha* in 1908 to put an end to the reactionary practices followed by their castemen. A false feeling of social status prevented them from taking to professions of agriculture, industry and trade. Further they wanted to remove Social evils like child marriage, purdah system etc.

It was recorded in the Administration report of 1910 of Travancore that only 976 children of the Nambudiri families had studied in schools. Kurur Unni Nambudiri was the leader of the *Yogakshemasabha* founded at Trichur with branches in different areas. They also organised a weekly known as the *Yogakshemam* for reforming the Nambudiris. A Youth League named *Nambudiri Yuvajana Sangham* also sprang up during this period under the leadership of V. T. Bhattatiripad and K. N. Kuttan Nambudiri. The former through some of his dramas like *Atukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* (From the Kitchen to the scene of Action, 1930) portrayed Nambudiri Social practices like the prevalence of polygamy, the marriage of young girl to old Nambudiri gentlemen,

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41. T. K. Ravindran, *Asan*, p. 55.

42. T. K. Ravindran, *Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhiji*, Sree Narayana Cultural Centre, Trichur, 1975, p-12.

etc.[43] The Youth League also advocated English education widow remarriage etc. through their monthly *the Unni Nambudiri.* B. Brahmadattan Nambudiripad (1897–1964) was ostracised from his community because of his radical views to reform his castemen.[44] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, who formed the first Communist Ministry in Kerala in 1957, was also closely associated with the activities of the Yogakshemasabha.[45] The Travancore Malayala Brahmin Regulation of 1931 defined and amended the law of succession of the Nambudiris. Provisions were also incorporated in the regulation for the better administration of family affairs, inheritance etc. *The Yogakshema Maha Sabha* was largely responsible for this enactment, which envisaged fundamental changes among the members of the Nambudiri Community.

In areas of central and north Travancore there were great Syrian Christian landholding families that claimed origin from Nambudiri Brahmin converts of St. Thomas, Christ's disciple. Syrian Christians had always been accorded respected status by *Savarnas*. Further, from the late 19th Century, as new opportunities became available and new pressures came to bear on the matrilineal joint family of Nayars, the most numerous caste Hindus, many Syrian Christians seemed to prosper at the expense of Nayars.[46] An offspring of this pressure and competition was the formation in 1914 of the Nair Service Society (NSS), one of the great caste associations of India, which imitated in some respects the Christian churches that seemed such useful institutions to their members.[47] By the third decade of this

43. C. R. Kesavan Vaidyar, *Margadarsikal* (Mal, Biographical Sketches) Vivekodayam, Irinjalakkuda, 1978, pp. 74–83.

44. K.V.G. Nair, *The Mathrubhumi*, Calicut dated, 4th October, 1964.

45. 34th Annual Conference, *Yogakshema Sabha Proceedings*, Dec. 1945.

46. Robbin Jaffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, London, 1976, Ch. VII.

47. *N.S.S. Golden Book*, Op. Cit. p. 13, Also see Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jivita Smaranakal* (Mal. Autobio.) 1964, pp. 34–35.

century, NSS had a membership of over 2 lakhs.[48] It was on the 31st of October 1914 at Mannathu house, Changanassery, that Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai (1878–1970) and a band of enthusiastic young men on the pattern of the Servants of India Society of Gopalakrishna Gokhale founded Nair Service Society. K. Kelappan Nair (1889-1969) was elected the first President of this association and Mannathu Padmanabhan, popularly known as Mannam, became its first General Secretary. While the work of the Society was mainly for the Nayars, its motto was the uplift of all communities in general. It had effectively fought the caste barriers, wasteful and unnecessary ceremonies and practices of the Hindu Society. It fought vigorously against untouchability and unapproachability. Line of succession and inheritance, Joint family system and other social questions also formed part of their social manifesto. Mannam continued in his capacity as the General Secretary of the N.S.S. for 31 years from its very inception during which span of time. he stabilised, expanded and enriched the society in a remarkable manner. Ceremonies and conventions in connection with birth, death, marriage etc. of an individual in a Nair joint family contributed not a little for the bankruptcy and economic ruin of the community. Compared to other communities, internal reforms inside Nayars also seemed essential for the benefit of the community. While Ezhavas, Pulayas and other backward castes demanded redress of their grievances from the government, Nayars wanted to secure it from their own Karanavarmars or Head of the family.[49] The work of Mannam who became the heart and soul of NSS eradicated many of the evils from the community. From the press and the platform, he fought indolence, waste and fissiparous tendencies.[50] In the long list of early Nayar reformers, mention must be made of Kallur Narayana Pillai, C. Krishna Pillai (1852–1916), P. Ayyappan Pillai

48. Police Commissioner to Chief Secretary 5 July 1936, Kerala Secretariat, Travancore confidential section, 1936.

49. Mannath Padmanabhan, *Op. Cit.* pp. 89–92.

50. T. C. Sankara Menon, "Mannath Padmanabhan", *Dictionary of National Biography*, IHS Calcutta, Vol. III, p. 281.

(1857-1907), Arakkal Parameswaran Pillai, A. K. Pillai (1893-1949) M. N. Nair, Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, K. P. Raman Pillai, T. P. Velukutty Menon, G. Raman Menon, Kumbalathu Sanku Pillai (1898-1969) etc.

Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha begun by Vakkam Abdulkhadir Maulavi (1873-1932) devoted itself for the emancipation of the Muslim Community. The Muslims were educationally a backward class and naturally Maulavi exhorted his Muslim brethern to study English and play their legitimate role in the Society.[51] In addition to his periodicals like "*Muslim*" and "*Deepika*", he also owned the famous "*Swadesabhimani*" ably edited by K. Ramakrishna Pillai (1878-1916) popularly known as Swadesabhimani. Ramakrishna Pillai unleashed severe attacks on the policies of the Diwan P. Rajagopalachari. His press was confiscated and he was deported by a Royal Proclamation in September, 1910.[52] It was a clear confession of weakness and is not an indication of strength for a Government to fall back upon force where it should rely upon law for the maintenance of order among its people.[53] In the columns of *Swadesabhimani* appeared editorials of merit attacking social evils of both Nayar and Muslim Communities. Through another journal *Al-Islam*, the Maulavi popularised Arabic-Malayalam. Abdul Khader also condemned all unislamic practices among the Muslims, whose genuine target was the social uplift and moral degeneration of the Community.[54]

The leaders like K. P. Karuppan, T. K. Krishna Menon, K. P. Vallon etc. worked for the social liberation of the lower castes in Cochin without the direct assistance of the major communal associations. *The All Cochin Pulaya Mahasabha* was

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51. S. M. Shah, "Islam and Kerala" *FWCMKC* Souvenir, p. 111.
52. K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadesabhimani*, (Mal.) NBS, Kottayam, 1878 pp. 277-92.
53. *The Hindu*, Madras, Sept. 28, 1910.
54. Roland Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, Orient Longmans, Madras, 1974, pp. 270-73.

formed in 1913 for the welfare of the Pulayas of Cochin. But the first and foremost leader of Harijans in Kerala was Ayyankali (1864–1941) who organised youngsters and defied orders prohibiting Harijans from the use of public thoroughfares. He campaigned for the removal of social taboos and inhibitions and worked for the right of admission to schools and right to wear clothes.[55] As early as 1907 he organised *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham* and opened branches throughout the State.

As a member of the Sri, Mulam Popular Assembly he sought the co-operation of all in eradicating the social evils. The Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 thrilled him very much and he organised a public meeting at Vengannur, his birth place in Trivandrum to welcome Mahatmaji. The father of the nation hailed Ayyankali as the King of Pulayas or *Pulayaraja*. The progress achieved by the Harijans in recent decades is in no small measure due to the untiring and selfless efforts of this leader of Pulaya uplift.[56] In 1890 Malayala Manorama weekly was started by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai (1857–1904). In its notable first editorial issue dated, 22nd March, 1890, the editor had drawn the attention of the readers to the important problem namely education of the Pulayas, a downtrodden Community of Kerala.[57] The social renaissance of Kerala in the first half of the 20th Century was characterised by the presence of K. C. Mamman Mappilai (1873–1953), the editor of the Manorama paper, whose editorials generated a social ferment in Kerala for the well being of man.[58] Another organization that sprang up during this period was *Adima Mahajana Sabha*, which advocated the welfare of Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas and Vettuvas. This organization registered on the 30th March, 1931, unlike other caste associations, was guided by leaders and members of other communities like

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55. M. K. Sanoo, *Op. Cit.*, p. 234.

56. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 386-87.

57. Murkot Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tarangini* (Mal.) Kottayam, 1975, pp. 442-45.

58. M. J. Kosby, *K. C. Mammen Mappilai*, Kerala Historical Society 1975, pp. 8–9.

Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, C. V. Kunhiraman, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai (1885–1970), Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, Mulur S. Padmahabha Panicker, Dr. K. P. Panikker etc.[59] Changanassery was President of the Harijan Seva Sangh for a long period which is a way accelerated the Temple Entry Movement in Travancore.[60]

Though economically prosperous, the Christians also had several grievances to be redressed. Even when they pursued agriculture, industry and trade, they experienced hardships on account of the laws of inheritance. In May, 1905, the Catholics of Travancore and Cochin held a public meeting at Mannanam which gave way for the rise of the *Catholic Mahajana Sabha*. The abolition of child marriage, dowry system etc. were the pressing demands made by E. J. John and Dr. Punnen, Presidents of *the Mahasabha.* The appointment of a Christian Commission under P. Cherian was largely because of the demands made by *Mahajana Sabha.* The Christian Succession Act of 1916 was enacted on the basis of the recommendations made by the *Catholic Mahajana Sabha.* In the princely state of Cochin also, Christians organised themselves. At last the government made some major amendments with regard to the rights of succession and inheritance, which ultimately formed the basis for the Cochin Christian Succession Regulation of 1921[61].

Vaikam Satyagraha

In the gloom that followed the suppression of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 and the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, the constructive program caught on the attention of the patriotic workers. And in Kerala, ridden as she was by castes and sub-castes and where a large part of the population was untouchable, the cry for social equality was particularly strong. This was the background of the famous Satyagraha at Vaikam (1924) temple, to be followed up later at the Guruvayur Temple

59. A. Thulasibai, "The Adima Mahajana Sabha", *J. of Kerala Studies,* University of Kerala, June 1976, p. 206.

60. C. Narayana Pillai, *Changanassery,* (Mal.), N. P. 1942, Passim.

61. Cochin Dewan's Letter No. 2205 dt. 25 Feb. 1921.

(1931). Both of them exemplified the immense potentialities of Satyagraha as an instrument of social change; and both were started with the blessings of Gandhiji.[62] Desabhimani T. K. Madhavan (1886-1930), the veteran social reformer, Sardar K. M. Panikker and K. P. Kesava Menon (1886-1978) attended together the Cocanada Congress of 1923 and enlisted the support of Gandhiji and other national leaders for the eradication of untouchability. It would appear that K. M. Panikker had suggested to T. K. Madhavan that only through Satyagraha could public attention be concentrated on the problem of untouchability. While Madhavan was for a Satyagraha at Haripad, Panikker suggested that it might be conducted at Vaikam and converted the former to his view point.[63] It was decided to start the Satyagraha on 30th March, 1924. Leaders like T. K. Madhavan, K. P. Kesava Menon, Mannath Padmanabhan, K. Kelappan, Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, C. V. Kunhiraman, Kurur Neelakantan Namboodiripad, A. K. Pillai, Alummottil Channar, M. N. Nair, George Joseph etc. played prominent roles in the different stages of the 20 month old struggle. *Savarna* Organizations like *the Kerala Hindu Sabha, the Nair Service Society* and *the Kshatriya Maha Sabha* whole heartedly supported the Satyagraha. Even *the Yogakshema Sabha*, the association of Nambudiris passed resolutions frequently in favour of opening all temples to the *Avarnas.*[64]

The *Savarna Jatha* organised by the Caste Hindus under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan eloquently dramatised the sympathy of the upper castes in favour of their brethern. After a period of violence, fasting and suffering, the temple authorities agreed to open all the roads except the East Gate and later withdrew the Satyagraha as per the advice of Gandhiji.[65]

62. *Kerala through the Ages*, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1976, p. 113. Also see T. K. Ravindran, *Vaikam.*

63. K. M. Panikkar, *Atmakatha* (Mal.), pp. 96-97 quoted by P. K. K. Menon, *Op. Cit.*, p. 117.

64. Mahadeva Desai, *The Epic of Travancore*, Navajivan Karyalaya Ahmedabad, 1937, p. 11.

65. Letter of Mahatma Gandhi to K. P. Kesava Menon, dt. 1-4-1924.

The Guruvayur Satyagraha staged from November, 1931, by K. Kelappan under the auspices of the Kerala P.C.C. was also withdrawn after ten months of struggle. On the advice of Gandhiji the Satyagraha was *intoto* withdrawn in 1932. Though both these satyagrahas had its ultimate object of temple entry, it was realised only partially. The Satyagrahis surrendered unconditionally to the State Power and withdrew with a heavy load of moral defeat on their back.[66] However, attempts were made to get temples opened for the *Avarnas*. On the 3rd of November, 1936, all Kerala Temple Entry conference waited on the Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and submitted a memorial praying for full, immediate and unreserved entry for Harijans. It was signed by 50522 *Savarnas* of Travancore. Later on the 12th September 1936 Srichitra Tirunal Balarama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore issued the famous Temple Entry Proclamation removing all restrictions placed on any of the Hindus by birth or religion for entering and worshipping in temples controlled by the Government. Gandhiji hailed this Proclamation as "a miracle of modern times" and as "a Smrithi which is the people's charter of spiritual emancipation". It came as a bambshell in orthodox Hindu circles, bringing about a silent and bloodless revolution of Kerala Society. It is a charter of religions liberty for all the so called downtrodden *Avarnas* of Travancore who had for centuries groaned under the weight of an injustice that had no sanction in Hinduism.[67] The Temple Entry Authorization Proclamation No. V of 1947-48 issued by the Maharaja of Cochin opened all temples of Cochin to the *Avarnas* of Cochin as well. The Act of Temple Entry of 1938 of the Madras Government granted similar freedom for all Hindus of Malabar by 1938. Thus with Indian independence untouchability has been almost abolished by legislation which completed the social revolution of Keralā.

Now we will turn our attention to the role of the press in the Social History of Modern Kerala. The Year 1886 stands out

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66. T. K. Ravindran, *Vaikam*, Conclusion.

67. Mahadeva Desai, *Op. Cit.* pp. 39-40; Also see S. R. Venkataraman, *Temple Entry Legislation*, Bharat Devi Publications, Madras 1946, Passim.

in the history of Malayalam Journalism as an epoch making year because it was in that year that a paper named *Malayali* edited by Petayil Raman Pillai Asan was published as an organ of the Malayalee Social Reforms League, one of the predecessor organizations of the Nayars.[68] Later it was edited by C. V. Raman Pillai, the noted Malayalam novelist who spearheaded social reforms in Travancore. From 1887 onwards *Deepika* or *Nasrani Deepika* was published from Kottayam with the ultimate target of the social, cultural and political uplift of the Christian Community. There was a profound awakening of the masses from the last quarter of the 19th century, especially among the so called *Avarnas* of the Hindu Society. *Swadesabhimani* owned by Abdul Khader Maulavi and edited by K. Ramakrishna Pillai disclosed many of the backdoor dealings of the Government Officials including the Dewan. For the first time in the annals of the press, an editor (Ramakrishna Pillai) was deported from the State with its press confiscated - a pioneer martyr for the cause of Indian journalism. Moorkoth Kumaran and later Mitavadi C. Krishnan (1867-1938) published *Mitavadi* from Calicut in 1907. It was in the forefront of the movement for social reforms, especially for the uplift of the Ezhavas. *The Kerala Kaumudi* founded by C. V. Kunjuraman and published from Mayyanad in 1911 which was shifted to Quilon and later to Trivandrum also accelerated the steps towards Ezhava uplift. T. K. Madhavan one of the General Secretaries of the SNDP *Yogam* started *Desabhimani* in 1915, which contributed in no small measure for focussing the attention of the people and the government about the disabilities of the Ezhavas. The fight of the editor (T. K. Madhavan) for social justice and equality won for him the epithet Desabhimani. In 1917 K. Ayyappan, popularly known as *Sahodaran* K. Ayyappan (1889-1968), published from Cherai in Alwaye an organ known as *Sahodaran.* It advocated temple entry for all *Avarnas,* intercaste marriages, interdining, responsible government etc. in Travancore. One of the disciples of Sri. Narayana Guru, Ayyappan himself started a movement called *Sahodara Prasthanam* organising a good number of intercaste feasts in which Harijans were also made parties. The

68. *N. S. S. Charitram,* N. S. S. Press, Changanassery, 1972, pp. 86-89.

participation of Pulayas along with Ezhavas in a feast secured for him the name *Pulayan Ayyappan* and on this charge Ayyappan was ostracised from his Community.[69]

Kesari A Balakrishna Pillai, well known as "*Kesari*", (1889–1960) edited the *Samadarsi* from 1923–26, and the *Kesari* from 1930 to 1935. Through the columns of these papers he wholeheartedly popularised the demands of the Satyagrahies of Vaikam (1924) aad Guruvayur (1932). Scathing criticism of the authorities was taken up by *Kesari* which exposed to public gaze the Dewan and his supporters. Though the *Kesari* was short lived, its impact on public opinion was tremendous. To Balakrishna Pillai the press was not only a vehicle to project news, it was also a forum for educating the public by disseminating knowledge and encouraging free thought and open discussion about social and political issues.[70]

In 1923 a nationalist paper "*the Mathrubhoomi*" was started from Calicut with K. P. Kesava Menon as its editor. The Vaikam satyagraha staged during this period become a mass movement largely because of the editorials in *Mathrubhoomi*. The demand for the grant of right of passage to the untouchables along approach roads to the Vaikam temple was vehemently advocated by this paper. The role of the press as a powerful instrument of social change found acceptance with a considerable section of the intellectuals during the national struggle for independence.[71] Some of these periodicals represented the interests of parties, communities and movements but despite this partisan approach, most of these journals or papers played a very decisive part in awakening the masses from conservatism and orthodoxy and pushing through social reform measures. *The Vivekodayam* of SNDP, *the Yogakshemam of Yogakshema*

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69. M. K, Sanoo, *Gp, Cit.*, pp. 234–35. Also see *The Press in Kerala* Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 15.

70. P. Kunjukrishna Menon, "A Balakrishna Pillai", *Dictionary of National Biography*, Calcutta, Vol. III, pp. 303–65.

71. *The Press in Kerala, Op. Cit.*, pp 20–21.

Sabha, *The Service* started in 1920 by NSS were all tools in the transition of Kerala Society.[72] The *Mitabhashi* of C. V. Raman Pillai, *the Nair* of Kainikkara Govinda Pillai, *the Malabari* of V. C. Balakrishna Panikker, *The Chandrika* of Muslim League, The *Desabhimani* and *Janayugam* of Communist Party, etc. also emphasised Social reforms for the well being of the Keralites.

Conclusion

Unlike the rest of India, in Kerala Social reform movement was started by Castes, Sub-Castes or religious groups. Essentially communal in their approach, these caste organizations tried to secure and establish their separate identity in the social structure of Kerala: Some of them succeeded in it and some others lost their old prominence and control. As against *the Savarnas* who dominated Kerala Society and politics earlier, the *Avarnas* established an upper hand in all affairs of the State after 1947 probably because of their strength. The rise of these communal organizations, reformed all the communities with regard to its age old customs and conventions and their keen competition during the first half of this century brought good results for a majority of them. Malayalam language united them all, irrespective of their caste and religion, for becoming part and parcel of the integrated Indian Society.

Sources

I have prepared this paper almost entirely by utilising original documents available in Malayalam with the relatives and friends of some of these social reformers. The private notes of these great personalities and my interview with some of their direct successors also helped me considerably in my attempt. In the cellar of the Kerala Secretariat there is a good collection of confidential files either giving information on these communal organizations or about the mass movement of Kerala. The newspaper reports, and editorials of papers and periodicals like *Nasrani Deepika*, *Malayali*, *Mitavadi*. *Swadesabhimani*, *Desabhimani*,

72. *Ibid.*

Malayala Manorama, *Sahodaran*, *Mathrubhoomi*, *Kerala Kaumudi*, *The Hindu*, the *Madras Standard*, and *the Mail* acted as a treasure of Knowledge. The Residency correspondence in English also provided me with some clues with regard to the puzzling problems of the period. Literary works in Malayalam also assisted me considerably in this venture to get a balanced picture of the drama of Social revolution in Kerala.

THE BRAHMANAS AND BRAHMANISM IN ŚAṄGAM LITERATURE

BY

DR. T. V. KUPPUSWAMI

A Survey of the Śaṅgam Literature in its present form, reveals that Brahmins formed an important sector of the social structure of those times. Since demographic statistics is not available, it is not possible, to determine the percentage of Brahmin population in those early centuries of the Christian-era. A considerable number of verses in the Śaṅgam Classics are attributed to Brahmin poets. Some like Kapilar and Paraṇar were the most outstanding among them. Certain scholars have estimated that the Brahmin poets constituted about one-tenth of the total number of Tamil poets of the Śaṅgam epoch. K. K. Pillay feels that the percentage could have even been higher.[1] A cursory glance at Society of Ancient Tamiḻakam makes it clear that the Brahmin's role was considerable. Most of the facts about them contained in the Śaṅgam Literature still remain to be investigated. The problem looked at from the point of culture cannot fail to get the solution that Brahmins have bequeathed a precious heritage. This Paper attempts to examine the position of the Brahmins in the Śaṅgam period. The study is primarily devoted to determine their position in the social, religious and cultural fields. It also attempts a survey of their economic affairs and seeks to assess the importance of their role in the different fields.

'Brahmin' — 'Brahmanism'

The words Brahmin and Brahmanism have acquired wide connotation by efflux of time that a scientific definition of them is necessary for our purpose. Brahmanism, as it is commonly understood, is a multiform structure consisting of polygenous

1. Pillay, K. K.: *Studies in the History of India with special reference to Tamilnadu* (*Madras*, 1979) p. 50.

religious ideas. The collection of qualities such as asceticism, knowledge of the scriptures and birth are supposed to go in the making of a Brahmaṇa. One without ascetism and scriptures is merely brahmana born. By misdirection the word Brahmāna is sometimes used when the meaning would be negated.

The word 'Brahmin' occurs rarely in the Rig Vēda and does not denote a person born in a Brahmin Family or of Brahmin priests.[2] The sanskrit grammarian Patanjali, gives in his Preamble 'in olden days after initiation, the brahmanas studied grammar, and learnt accent, pronounciation and intonation of the Vēdic words.[3] In general, a person possessed of Brahma (Prayer) was called 'Brahman'.[4] With the rise of the Cult of sacrifice, he was entrusted with the work of the officiating priest. In this way 'Brahman–hood'" was determined by function and not by birth in the distant past.

In this context it is interesting to note that priests were recruited from the conquered aborgines of the Āryan invaders.

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2. Macdonell, A, A.: *A History of Sanskrit Literature* p. 136.
   "The word 'Brahman' occuring only eight times while brahman which simply means sage or officiating priest is found forty-six times. But in the Vēda, Brahmin is not really an officiating priest. He is silently watching the performance of others, intervening only, thanks to his science, to repair the faults".
3. *Mahābhāsya.*
4. That Brahmana means a follower or descendant ot Brahma is generally admitted. We find, however, one highly significant passage in which the God is not Brahma, but the Vedic deity Indra. In the *Kausitaki Upanishad* (3.1). *Indra* says to Pratardana Daivodasi, "Understand me, myself. This indeed, I deem, most beneficial to man.........namely that one should understand me. I slew the three-hundred son of Tvasta. I delivered the Amirmagha, ascetics to the wild digs. Transgressing many compacts, I transfixed the people of Prahtada in the sky, the paulomos in the atmosphere, the Kalkamjas on earth. Such was I, then (TASYA MĒ TATRA) that I never turned a hair (NA LOMA CA MĀ MIYATĒ). So, he who understands me-by no deed whatsoever of his is his world injured, not by stealing, not by killing an embryo, not by the slaying of his mother, not by the slaying of his father, if he has done any evil. (Pāpa), his countenance will not blench"...........

"Brahmanism" says Pargiter "Originally was not a Aila or Āryan institution. The earliest Brahmins were connected with non-Āryan people and established among them when Ailas entered".[5] D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sarma too consider 'Brahmana' as an Indo-European institution.[6] R. S. Sharma says "though there is nothing to indicate the proportion of recruitment, it seems that some of the pre-Āryan priests found their way into the new society".[7] Reviewing the history of India, in general, from its dawn we could very well discern that the prestige and power of the Brahmins grew at least upto the Sixth Century B. C. uninterrupted.

Gōthra names in Śaṅgam Literature:

The Gōthra system is an outstanding feature of even modern brahmanism which has otherwise made many compromises in the matter of worship and ritual. In the Rig-Vēda, the word Gōthra is used to denote "a herd of Cattle". In latter times, down to the present day, it has the meaning of an exogamous, patriarchal family unit, corresponding roughly to the 'Gens' in Rome. Brahmin Gōthras are grouped into large units by common 'Pravaras' of which Baudhāyana recognises forty-nine sets in an almost unlimited number of Gōthras.[8] The Gōthra seems to be purely a brahmanic institution and is mostly derived from the names of sages.

The largest groups into which the Gōthras are combined, besides officially admitted discrepancies are only Eight. The Gōthrakāra Rishis are 1) Jamadhagni 2) Bharadvāja 5) Gōthama 4) Kāśyapa 5) Vasishta 6) Agasthiya 7) Atri and 8) Visvāmitra. No brahmin Gōthra is valid that does not contain the name of one of these or his supposed descendants. But, these are not the original Rishis even in Brahmanical theory. A brahmin is the descendent of Brahma and as such has one of the ancestors

5. *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* pp. 306-308.
6. Kosambi, D. D.: *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956) pp. 97-98.
7. *Shudras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958) pp. 20-21.
8. *Gruhya Sutra* (Baudhayana).

making the following list. 1) Brigu 2) Angīras 3) Marīchi 4) Atri 5) Pulaha 6) Pulastya 7) Vasishta. Some measure of accord has been made by taking Jamadhagni as the descendant of Brugu, Baradhvāja and Gōthama (mentioned in the anthologies) are then the descendants of Angīras. Kāśyapa, Vasishta and Agasthiya are taken to be descended from Marīchi and Viswāmithra is made the descendant of Atri.

In the Upanishads we hear of the Gōthras such as Gauthama, Jamadagni, Kāśyapa, Vasishta, Bharadvāja, Asvalāyana, Gārgya, Bhārgava, Kātyāyaṇa etc.[9] Such terms denote the schools founded by these sages and any one passing out of these schools bore the name of that school. In the age of the Sūtras these terms had lost that sense and were used in connection with marriages.[10] So Āpastamba enjoins a father not to give his daughter to a 'Sagōtra' (Same gothra) in marriage.[11] The Vaikhānaśa says "Born of Brahmas" mouth, the Brahmin men and women became gōthra organs (Brahmarishis) and one who was born of Brahmin woman belonging to a different gōthra, married in accordance with the religious rites and with the recitation of the mantras.[12] Thus the Brahmins are responsible for the Gōthra classification.

The term 'Gōthra' may be defined as an exogamous patrilineal kinship whose members trace their descent back to a common ancestor. According to Baudhāyana, a gōthra is the whole group of persons descended from one of the seven rishis or Agastya (*Sapthānām Rishīnām Agastyashta main yad apatyam tad gōthram*). A 'Pravara' is a stereotyped list of names of ancient rishis or seers, who are believed to be the remote founders of the families. Later on Pravara was extended to other two varṇas—Kshatriya and Vaiśya.

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9. *Brhadaranyaka Upauishad* 2.2.4.
   Chandogya Upanishad 5 14.1.
10. Pandey, V. C.: *Bhartavarṣa Kā Samājika Ithikāsa* p. 35.
11. *Āpasthamba Dharma Sūtra* 2.5.11-15.
12. *Vaikhāhaśa Dharma Sūtra* 3.11.3.

Some Gōthras are found in inscriptions. A well known case is that of the Sathavāhanās, who have a Vasishtaputra (Pulumāyi) at least one Gōtamiputra (Yajnsri Sathakarṇi) a Mathariputra etc.; while Bhavagōpa, the commander in chief of Yajnasri's army is called a Kauśika in the Nāsik cave inscription. Though they gave plentifully to the Buddhist Śaṅga the Nānaghat inscription (of Naganika ?) as well as the Nasik inscription of Pulumāyi show that these Kings were completely brahminized, conscious followers of Brahman ritual—

Identifying Gōthras of famous names is not always easy and proving their historicity apart from tradition even less simple. The common feature of lists naming the founder Rishis is their number seven. A surprising deficiency is that there is no Kāśyapa book of the Rig Vēda. The name is mentioned only once in the very last hymn of the ninth book (ix. 114–2). This may be a later addition. Kāśyapa is a prominent gōthra-kāra. No less an authority Baudhāyana says that if by mistake both parents are found to belong to the same Gōthra, the embryo may be taken without blame as Kāśyapa (Gōthra Pravara Nibandha-p. 136— "GARBO NA Dusyathi, KĀŚYAPA ITi Vignāyatē). Others like Āpasthamba would consider the child as an absolute out-caste (Candāla). Likewise, if one's own gōthra and that of the family priest be both unknown for some reason, we have the authority of Satyāsadha, who seems to quote a still older source to the effect that the Gōthra must be taken as Kāśyapa (*Gōthraśya tv aparignāne Kiśyapam gōthram isyatē—Gōthra Pravara Nibandha*— p. 187). Later on this Kāśyapa is a "*PRAJĀPATHI*", one from whom almost all living creatures are descended (*Mahābhāratha*— Poona critical edition—1.59.10 ff). This shows the special importance attached to that Gōthra. The 'Agastyas' are not prominent in the oldest Vēda.

The Gōthra names usually associated with the brahmins are clearly indicated in Puṟanānūṟu. A poem on Dharmaputra by Gōtamanār, another by Mārkkaṇḍēyanār, Vanmīkiyār, Nedumbaratāyanār (Baratvājanār) Pālai Gouthamanār and the like indicate Gōthra names. A brahmin by name Chōnāttu Punjāṟṟūr Pārppan

Kauṇiyan Viṇṇaṭāyan is said to have belonged to the Kauṇḍinya Gōthra.[13] It is strange that the name of Agasthiya is conspicuous by its absence in the Tamil list. Nachchinārkkiniyar in his commentary on Tolkāppiyam–Puṟattiṇai Iyal says that the work by Mārkkaṇḍēyanār is "Talaiyāya Ōṭtu" (Primary teaching) and that it is a Tamilian counter-part of the first three Vēdas of the Āryans. He seems to suggest that Mārkkaṇḍēyanār is one of the most ancient among Tamil poets.[14] U. V. Swaminatha Iyer thinks that Vanmīkiyār does not belong to the first Śaṅgam.[15] Nevertheless, they are typically sanskrit names different from the general trend of nomenclature in the Śaṅgam period. The name Brahmanār is significant. He bears the name of 'Brahma' Himself from which the term 'Brahmana' can be derived. It is good to remember that a considerable number of Gōthra names are animal totems as for example Bharadvaja–Sky lark; Gōtama–best bull; This means that some brahmins have animal totems to explain their ancestor. These poets give the philosophical message of the "Transcience of earthly existence". If we trust that these men belonged to an early period of Tamil literary evolution, we might as well conclude that they lived at a time when the process of "Aryanisation" in Tamiḻakam was in full swing. The feelings of despair and frustration leading to renunciation which characterised pre-Buddhist Vēdic metaphysics is discernible in the writings of these men. This presents a powerful contrast to the high material civilisation which the Tamils had developed.

We are more concerned with the Gauthama, Bharadvāja and Kauṇḍinya Gōthras since they find specific mention in the Puṟanāṉūṟu. A Gauthama and Bharadvāja are Gōthra-kāras. The Upanishads are quite catholic in their choice of deities above whom 'Brahma' is to be elevated. The Svētasvatāra emphasizes the one god cult in extolling Rudra–Mahēsvara, but Brahma is the background for that deity. Kausitaki (I 3–5) makes Indra and Prajāpathi door keepers to Brahma. All this did not preserve the

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13. *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 183.

14. *Tolkāppiyam*: *Puṟattiṇai Iyal*: Sūtra 20.

15. *Introduction to his edition to Puṟanāṉūṟu.*

Brahma-cult. The Upanishads seem to represent a long process of assimilation and adoption of rituals as well as philosophy of the Brahmana's 'Yagna' (Sacrifice) and its philosophy have clearly been acquired from Kshathryas. The Pañchāla oligarch Pravāhana Jaivali explicitly says (*Chandōgya* 5.3.7 and *Brahadāraṇyaka* 6.2.8) that *GAUTHAMA* had begged this knowledge of him, would be the very first brahmin to possess it. This would be incomprehensible if all Brahmins had always been Āryan priests. The cult of Brahma is pre-Āryan and non-Āryan. Some passages in *Kēna Upanishad* (14-28) show that the Āryan Gods Agni, Vāyu and Indra could not recognise Brahma at sight. The identity of the strange divine apparition is revealed to Indra, by Umā, daughter of Himavat.

Bharadvāja and Gōthama are the descendants of Āngiras. In addition there seems to be Kauṇḍinyas among the Bharadvājas (*Gōtra-Pravara Nibandha* 163.I). It is difficult to find how all these came about. Yet the information is relevant in as much as they concern the Gōthra names that find mention in Śaṅgam literature.

Migration :

It is difficult to fix the time of migration of these 'Northern-elements'. The Śaṅgam works neither indicate nor provide a clue to fix the migration of Brahmins. Nevertheless attempts have been made to fix the time of migration rather unconvincingly. They may be briefly summarized as follows : (a) Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa records a tradition of Visvāmitra having condemned his fifty sons to live in the southern borders of Āryavartha.[16] These migrants are said to be the ancestors of Andhras, Pundras, Sabaras and Pulindas. There is neither a reference to Tamiḻakam nor to Brahmins in this list. (b) Another tradition associates their arrival here with Parasurāma. After extirpating the Kshathryas, he made a gift of all his conquest to Kāśyapa coming to the south, he created Kerala by causing the sea to withdraw and settled the Brahmins whom he brought from Ahichchatra in sixty four

16. *Aitreya Brahmana*: VII. 18.

villages.[17] For serving them he brought Sūḍras also and settled them in their midst. He also founded many shrines and instituted many festivals. After providing for the Government of the land, he retired to the mountains where he is believed to be still engaged in TAPAS or religious austerities for the welfare of Kerala![18]

It is said that after rooting out the Kshathriyas of the North, Paraśurāma came to the south. Agasthya, the 'Purōhitha' (Chaplain) saved the Chōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas by making Paraśurāma believe that the rulers here were not of Kshathriya pedigree. Then Paraśurāma proceeded to Kerala. The Kshathriyas here saved themselves by appearing before him without the sacred thread and claiming to be Sūḍras.[19]

The Paraśurāma legend has come down to us in various versions. Some are meagre, some more circumstantial, still others even inconsistent with the creation of Kerala. Hence the information provided by Kēraḷōḷppatti is to be ignored as unhistorical.

Paraśurāma is the hero of the Bhārgava clan (Bhrghus). The Bhrghus appear as historical people in the Rig-Vēda but only three or four times. They are undoubtedly associated with the Druhyus, though whether as warriors or as priests is not clear. The Bhārgava chariot appears in *Rig-Vēda* (IV 16. 20). They were on the losing side. The King of Druhyus was killed in battle against Śudas.

But we find discrepancies between Vēdic and Epic records. There are reasons to believe that the Mahābhāratha was the property of the Bhārgava clan who rewrote it for their own purpose.[20] Paraśurāma seems to be the only authentic hero who

17. Kerala was the Cēra country of ancient Tamilakam.
18. Anujan Achan, P.: *Paraśurāma legend and its significance* (Annual Report of the Archaeological Department of the Cochin State, 1934-35).
19. *Kēralōlppaṭṭi*: (Malayalam) p. 18.
20. Sukthankar, V. S.: *Epic Studies VI*: *The Bhrgus and the Bharata—A Text historical study* (Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute XVIII 1-76; Collected works Vol. I 278-337).

could fight and who annihilated the Kshathryas no less than twenty one times. This superfluous killing is really a form of over-compensation or psychological revenge, The revenge is carried in unconvincing fashion. c) Sardar K. M. Panikkar makes the following observation — "Sometime before the 3rd Century B.C.; a small trickle of brahmins seems to have reached the Tamil Country. The process of migration is not clear; but it would appear that they were settled in the area by a powerful monarch; for geographical distribution, the organisation of the community and their special customs show clear-sighted planning which could not have the result of unregulated migration. The Nambūdris or the immigrant brahmins have since then formed the apex of Kerala society".[21] The Pāṇḍya and Chōḷa countries during the period present a different picture. It is difficult to admit this observation of Panicker. The earliest writer of known date who refers to the creation of Kerala is Śēkkizhār, minister of Kulōttuṅga II (A.D. 1133-1150).[22] In the Chōḷa-Kēraḷa conflict (A.D. 988-1120), the Brahmins also took an active part fighting in the ranks of the respective rulers. The amity and free intercourse that had marked their mutual relations till then disappeared and the Brahmins of Kerala came to be called NAMPIS or NAMPŪTIRIS by their east-coast brethren.[23] This account contradicts that given by Panicker. Despite these varied accounts of Brahmin settlement in Kerala, the fact remains that they were established factors in the Social structure of the Chēra country during the Śaṅgam epoch. "Brahmana settlement at Cellūr was firmly established with a sacrificing tradition even during the Sangam period."[24]

(d) K. K. Pillay writes: "It is important to remember that the Hindu Aryans did not all migrate to South India at one stretch. The epigraphic evidence as well as the names of groups of

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21. *A History of Kerala* 1498-1821 A.D. (Annamalai University, 1959) p. 2.

22. *Periya Purāṇam* (Viran-mintār).

23. Padmanabha Menon, K. P.: *History of Kerala Vol. III* p. 173 n 3.

24. Veluthat Kesavan: *Cellur-An early Aryan Settlement*-(Journal of Kerala-Studies, March 1975, Vol. II Part I).

brahmins who were settled at different stages in different places prove this. The designations of groups like "Nāṟpeṭṭeṉṉāyiravar" and 'Eḻunūṟṟuvar' clearly suggest that waves of immigrants came into the Tamil country. Perhaps the village Eṇṇāyiram (Eight thousand) may be one of the places where the community had settled. It is found that now the name survives in a large number of villages where Smartha Brahmins live in the Tamil country. Some have suggested that Eṇṇāyiram was the original name and that later it was sanskritised into 'Ashtasahasram.' The probability seems to have been the reverse of the suggestion. The section of brahmins in the Tamil country known as Vaḍamas obviously consists of those who came from the north; they claim themselves to be pure in descent from the Āryans. Some of the Śaṅgam poets had names like Vadamōdankiḻār, Vaḍamavaṇṇakkan Dāmōdaranār and Vaḍaman Vaṇṇakkan Pēri Śāttan; these indicate that these poets belonged to groups which had hailed from the North....................The designation 'Vaḍama' applied to a group only among the Brahmins shows that there were others, indigenous to the Tamil country, who became transformed into brahmins."[25]

This hypothesis built on doubtful premises totally fails to explain the migration of northern elements. It is immaterial whether 'Eṇṇāiram' is sanskritised into 'Ashtasahasram' or the latter is tamilised. The Tamil brahmins are divided mainly into Smārthas and Vaishnavas.[26] The different branches among the Smārthas are a) Vaḍama b) Kēśigaḷ c) Brahacharaṇam d) Vāthima or Madhēma e) Ashtasahasram f) Dīkshithar g) Shōḻiar h) Mukkāṇi i) Kaṇiyāḷar j) Śaṅkēthi k) Prathamaśāki and l) Gurukkaḷ. Among the Vadamas, there are sub-divisions. 1) Chōḷadēśa 2) Vaḍadēśa 3) Savāyar or Saghāyar 4) Inji 5) Thummagunta Drāvida. Granting that Dr. Pillay means only Vaḍadeśa Vaḍaman, the branch (Saka) is not from the Northern India (Āryavartha) but has only a regional connotation within Dakshina-

25. Op. Cit., Chapter III, pp. 41-43.

26. The dominance of Śiva and a polarisation of Śiva and Vishṇu occurs only from the time of the Cōḷas in the 9-10th Centuries A.D.

patha. Ashtasahasram is no doubt considered to be inferior to the Vaḍamas as well as Brahacharaṇams. This complex is the result of the variety of attitudes to life that the Śākas practise, and the questions of racial purity, inferiority or superiority do not arise.[27] Ashṭasahasram brahmins are more Saivites than the Vaḍamans (obviously later development) The females wear their cloth very elegantly with the lower border reaching so low as to cover the ankles. There are many sub-divisions in this Śāka too. They are 1) Aththiyūr 2) Arivarpade 3) Nandivādi 4) Shatkulam (six families). Their numbers being few, inter-marriage is not entirely prohibited among the sub-divisions. That the differences among the Smārtha sub-divisions (Śākas) are one of habit and attitude to life and not racial is being realised increasingly of late and intermarriages are very common. What determines eligibility is the Gōthra. Sagōthra marriages continue to be considered undesirable even at present.

Racial theories built on the slender evidences of the names of persons and places cannot be admitted unreservedly. Place names like Eṇṇāyiram, Paḷḷappaṭtu, Pārpanappatti, Mudalūr, etc. are accidental and do not always explain the origin of Paḷḷar, Parppanar, or Mudaliar. At best, in certain cases they may be suggestive and in such instances corroborative evidences are needed to confirm or reject the suggestion. Likewise, the names of poets cannot always be taken as positive evidences. 'Vaḍama' cannot be taken as indicating Northern India. (Aryavartha) An analysis of the names of Śaṅgam poets would reveal that invariably the name of the place wherefrom the poet hails is unambiguously mentioned, or some striking characteristic feature is indicated by the name.[28] Likewise in the name 'Vaḍama Vaṇṇakkan

27. The well-known proverbs are:—"Vadamakkattu, Vāthima Chettu, Ashtasahasra-Pilukku and so on"-(Vadamas known for scrupulous caste observance, Vāthima for parsimony, Ashtasahasra for show and display) "Vaḍaman muthshi Vaishnavam" (Vadama ripens into a Vaishnava).

28. Cf:
Mārōkkattu Nappaśalaiyar: Mārōkkam is the country round Koṛkai-Neduṁ Kaḷuttu Paraṇar: Perhaps the name is indicator of his long neck-pakkuḍukkai Nankaṇiyar is the name-A good astrologer-Name is suggestive of the dress.

Dāmōdaranār,' Vaṇṇakan means a shroff (Nāṇaya Pariśōthakan-Examiner of currency) and Dāmōdaranār is his name.[29] 'Vadama' need not accessarily mean that he hailed from the North of India, at best his native place could have been situated north of his place of residence within the region itself.

'The migration of Brahmins' into Tamiḻakam is a much debated theme. Alappat Sreedhara Menon expresses the view that the "Aryan emigration" to the South consisted mostly of brahmana priests and instructors.[30] Historians like K. M. Panikkar and K. K. Pillay are quite conscious of the fact that there was no large scale migration of the brahmanas from the North to the South. Panikkar scoffs at the Indian scholars who follow the idea "promulgated by some European scholars" "that the Dravidians were an earlier group of settlers who came from outside and brought civilisation to the south. In his view the Deccan and Peninsular India had from the earliest times a civilisation independent of the North.[31] K. K. Pillay on the other hand prefers to suspend judgement on the antiquity of South Indian civilisation till some more evidence is forthcoming.[32] But he is quite positive that only a section of the brahmins came from the north and ingratiated itself with the local Dravidian rulers.[33] As if an answer to the theory of brahmana immigration from the North, N. Subramanyam observes that the ruling chieftains of the

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29. Swaminatha Iyer, U. V.:—Introduction to his 4th Edition Puṟanāṉūṟu (1950) p. 55.

30. *A Survey of Kerala History* (Kottayam, 1967) p. 96.

The view had been expressed by earlier writers such as Caldwell and Kanakasabhai. Caldwell expressed the view that the Aryan emigration to the south consisted of the peaceful Brahmana priests and instructors and not of Kṣatrya warriors or Vaisya traders. (*A Comparative grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of languages*-Reprint-Madras, 1961) pp. 39, 67, 69). Kanakasabhai regards the brahmanas as Aryan immigrants who entered Tamilakam about the fifth or sixth century B.C. (*Tamil Eighteen Hundred Years Age*-(Madras, 1956)-pp. 238-39).

31. *A Survey of Indian History*-(Bombay, 1957) p. 10.

32. *The Suchindram Temple* (Adyar, Madras, 1953) p. 14.

33. *The Caste-System in the Śaṅgam Age.* (Journal of Indian History April 1962 pp. 513-19).

Sangam age, Vēḷirs and their followers Veḷḷāḷas were non-Aryan north Indian immigrants. He reiterates the view that the majority of the Brahmanas in Śaṅgam and subsequent ages were indigenous priests deeply attached to Tamil language and culture and only a very small number of them had come from the North.[34] Taking historical probabilities into consideration, it seems reasonable to conclude that along with others, the Brahmins too migrated into Tamiḻakam. There has also been a gradual process of amalgamation.

The time of arrival of the vēdic Brahmins into Tamiḻakam could only be speculated with the source-materials available at present at our command. They did not come here to conquer or rule. Their coming was a slow, imperceptible infiltration, never stopping and never sweeping.

Since the advent of Jainism and Buddhism the Brahmins themselves show strong divergence from vedic practices. The Magadan Brahmins for example are referred to with social contempt as BRAHMA BANDHU, being definitely associated with extra-vēdic vratyas. Brahmins themselves were penetrating into hitherto unknown regions as pioneers which is seen from the story of Buddha's disciple Bavari who had found the Brahmanic refuge on the banks of the Godavari. This expansion takes place without a corresponding Kshathriya conquest. The wave could have entered Tamiḻakam also, perhaps through the Andhra Country in the age of the Sathavāhanas. An inscription records how an Andhra King Vilivayakura II destroyed a Sāka chief about A.D. 126 and 'prevent the mixing of the four castes'. These inferences are only from circumstantial evidences and hence could not be pressed for.

Social Life:

The status of the brahmins as well as their obligations to society were no doubt more or less well-settled in the Śaṅgam

34. *Śaṅgam Polity* (Madras, 1966) p. 254.

35. Pargiter, F, E.: "*The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*"- (Oxford, 1913) V. 16, p. 22.

period. The "pārppan" of the Śaṅgam days called himself as "Antaṇan Pulavar".[36] Tolkāppiyam uses the word Antaṇar to mean both such brahmins and ascetics among them.[37] The Tirukkuraḷ so defines the word as to include the monks and saints belonging to other faiths like Buddhism and Jainism as well.[38] The Tirukkuraḷ couplet states that the Antaṇars are those who are '*aṟavōr*' who show infinite compassion to all life. Aṟavōr are persons who lead ethically perfect lives. Tolkāppiyar himself had enunciated the six fold functions of the Brahmins namely 1) Study of the Vēḍas 2) teaching of the Vēdas 3) Conducting Vēdic sacrifices 4) Officiating as priests in sacrifices 5) Giving gifts to others and 6) receiving gifts.[39] However, there have also been brahmins who were not well-versed in the Vēdas and living unorthodox lives. This section was denoted as "Vēḷappārppān",[40] Brahmins who took to secular pursuits were spoken of as "Fallen (degraded)-Brahmins". The four sanskrit Vēḍas were called 'Nānmaṟai'.[41]

The existence of 'Vēḷāppārppans' suggest that occupationally the Brahmaṇa group was heterogenous. This provides a striking

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36. Kapilar, the ancient brahmin poet styled himself likewise. using the word 'Pārppar" to mean a brahmin.

37. *Tolkāppiyam*: *Marabiyal* Sūtra 70.

38. *Tirukkuṟaḷ*: 30 Tirukkuṟaḷ (Muppāll) is classified as one of the eighteen Kiḷkkaṇakku works. It, however stands as a class by itself. K. K. Pillay is of the view that it was produced about the same time or perhaps a little earlier than most of the classics of the third Śaṅgam. (Dr. Pillay, K. K. *A Social History of the Tamils-Part I*, University of Madras, 1969, p. 113).

39. *Tolkāppiyam-Puṟattiṇai Iyal* Sūtra 73.

    Tirumurukāṟṟuppaḍai: 177-(Also) the expression "Arutoḷil Antaṇar" in *Śilappathikāram XXIII*: 70 Iḷangō, the author of *Śilappathikāram* describes them as "Purinūl Pārppar"-those who wore the sacred thread only in name. Canto XIII 38-9.

40. *Ahanānūṟu*: 24.

41. A theory that "Nānmaṟai" refers to Tamil Vēdas and not to Sanskrit texts, was projected by K. Subramania Pillai. It was effectively rebutted by M. Sambasivam Pillai. Both are not seriously taken by any disinterested scholar today.

resemblance to the evidence provided by Pali texts about conditions in Northern India.[42] On the grounds of occupational differentiation the Pali texts distinguish between two significant classes. One adhered strictly to the priestly vocation; the other followed a variety of non-priestly occupations. The Brahmana group that faithfully adhered to the Vēdic tradition, claimed intellectual and lineage connection with some of the great rishis like Bharadvāja.[43] They belonged to well-known ritual groups. They are described in a set manner as "repeater (of the sacred-words). Knowing the mystic verses by heart, one who has mastered the Three Vēdas, with the indices, the ritual, the phonology and the exegesis (as a fourth) and the legends as a fifth, learned in the idioms and grammar, versed in Lōkayata sophistry and in the theory of signs on the body of a great man".[44] This reference to Pali texts makes it clear that occupational taboos on brahmins were absent, and there was nothing strange on infradig about some brahmins in Śaṅgam society pursuing different vocations.

a) Abode, Dress, Diet :

Villages called 'Parpanachēris' were occupied exclusively by the brahmins. In Ōymānāḍu Āmur seems to be one such brahmin settlement.[45] The *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppatai,* describes a village on the road to Kānehi as "Maṟai-Kāppāḷar Uṟaipati".[46] Certain villages had streets, where Brahmins alone resided. The streets were

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42. *Pāli Texts.*
 Dighanikaya -Three Volumes (1958).
 Majihimanikaya- „ (1958).
 Samyuttanikaya-Four Volumes (1959).
 They are edited by Bhikku J. Kasyap and published by the Pali publication Board (Bihar Govt.) Nalanda.

43. *Mahanavagga* : p. 259.
 Dighanikaya : I, p. 91.

44. Rhys Davids, T. W. (Trans.) *Dialogues of ihe Buddha*. (London, 1956) pp. 109-110.

45. *Sirupānāṟṟuppatai* : 187-8. Later these exclusive settlements came to be known as Agraharas.

46. Ibid : 301.

known as 'Āśil Teruvu'.[47] The residential quarters were clean and simple.[48] The flooring of the house was kept clean with water mixed with cow-dung. At the entrance to the house there was a thatched canopy of palm-leaves. Dogs and fowls were not allowed to enter the house. Calves were tied infront of the houses in posts erected for the purpose. Parrots were tended with care and trained to recite the Vēdic hymns.

References in Perumpāṇāṟṟuppatai vouchsafe that the Brahmins were strict vegetarians and their food-habits were simple. Kapilar, the reputed brahmin poet of the Śaṅgam epoch speaks with relish the use of meat and drink.[49] Consequently a controversy has appeared whether exclusive vegetarianism was the rule for the Brahmins of the Śaṅgam period. N. Subrahmanian is not prepared to admit that Brahmanas could have been meat eaters in the Śaṅgam age, despite the evidence put forth by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and accepted by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.[50] His explanation that the Brahmana poet Kapilar assumed the role of a Pāṇar in expressing his appreciation of meat and wine and he did not do so in reality, is far fetched and seems to be a feeble defence. K. K. Pillay observes "The fact is that through the influence of Jainism and Buddhism, abstinence from meat and drink was beginning to be adopted in Tamiḻakam. But the adoption of the new practice must have been inevitably gradual; therefore it is not surprising that some brahmins of Tamiḻakam might have continued the old practice in the Śaṅgam age too. One cannot ignore the fact that the Vēdic brahmins of the North themselves had taken to meat and drink and that it was but gradually that they renounced them".[51]

Dr. Pillay's contention that abstinence from meat and drink was due to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism needs further substantiation with more supporting evidences. His statement

47. *Kuṟuntokai* : 277

48. *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppatai* : 299 ff.

49. *Puṟanāṉūṟu* : 113, 119.

50. Subrahmanian : Op. Cit., pp. 255 ff., 261, 273.

51. *A Social History of the Tamils* Part-I (Madras University, 1969) pp. 219-220

implies that Brahmins prior to the spread of these influences were habitual meat-eaters. If Śaṅgam literature reflects the gradual spread of the Jaina and Buddhistic influences, it should have been broughtforth with concrete instances traceable in the literature.

Abstinence from meat and drink had not been preached as a brahmanic virtue. Patanjali the grammarian mentions casually, observances that are certainly not allowed in post Buddhistic official Brahmanism such as meat eating. In his Preamble (Mahābāshya) he declares "Thus, by rules of what is permitted is implied what is forbidden. By the rule five-sorts of five nailed animals may be eaten, follows this, that is forbidden to eat the rest. Or, by what it is forbidden to eat follows what may be eaten; thus a village cock is not to be eaten; from this it follows that the wild ones may be eaten; Similarly one hankering after flesh can't help bringing a fish with spines and scales; he after having taken the useful portion discards the scales and spines" (1.2.39) Patanjali takes his examples from every day life and not from some theoretical conclusions based upon scripture. He is fully acquainted with contemporary north Indian life and usage. Barley, rice, wheat, milk were among the principal ingredients of the food of the Vēḍic brahmins. Barley is frequently mentioned in the Rig-Vēda and other Samhithas.[52] But rice and wheat are not referred to in the Rig Vēda,[53] though named in the later Samhithas.[54] Cakes and Meals mixed with curds or butter were offered to the Gods. Milk was the regular food of the people. The mention of meat is also made in the Rig Vēda and other Samhithas.[55] A verse in the Rig Vēda describes the fire as

52. *Rig Vēda*: 1, 23, 15 : 1.117.21
Atharva Vēda: VIII. 7.20

53. Sukthankar, V. S.: *Ghate's Lectures on Rig Vēda* p. 164
Om Prakash: *Food and Drinks in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1963) p. 9

54. *Atharva Vēda* VIII. 7-20
Vajasaneyi Samhita XVIII 12; XIX 22.89. XXI 29

55. *Sathapatha Brahmana* XII 7.1.2; 7.2.9
Rig Vēda: I. 161.10; V 29.7; VIII 12.8
Maitrayani Samhita: III 14
Vajasaneyi Samhita: XIII 47-51.
Aitreya Brahmana VI 8 and *Satapatha Brahmana* IX 7.1.3

consuming Oxen and barren cows.[56] At another place Gods are said to be engaged in the cooking or eating a number of buffaloes.[57] The ritual offerings of flesh implied that priests would eat it. It was customary to feed the guests with the flesh of animals. But it is quite evident that during the later Vēdic period, the eating of meat and especially of beef was not considered good.[58] The Atharva-vēda counts the eating of cow's flesh among sins against one's forefathers.[59] The Aṭharva Vēda and Sathapatha Brāhmana say that those who observed the vow generally abstained from meat diet.[60] The Tamilian Brahmins' conduct is therefore nothing strange. In addition it is good to remember that the picture that we get in Śaṅgam literature is one of a transitional society of a tribal or semi-tribal agrarian society into a vaṛṇa divided society. Perhaps the crucial factor was the brahman bard embodying the more advanced consciousness of contemporary Āryan culture and working on the material from Tamil-society. He formed an integral part of the tribal society, influencing it and being influenced by it. The customary diet of the Brahmins along with several others was the simple meal of rice with accessories of green vegetables and milk products.[61]

The Pāṇan describes the housewives of the Brahmins who were as faithful and respectable as Aruntati, the consort of the famous Vasishta. They would cook rice mingling with pulses to make it palatable. The paddy used for cooking in brahmin houses is termed as "Paravaippeyarpaḍu Vattam" in the text. Naccinarkkiniyar means this as 'Raśānnam' and it is sometimes taken to mean a special variety of paddy namely "Garudan Champa".[62] Brahmin ladies are experts in the preparation of

56. *Rig Vēda* VIII 43.11
57. Ibid : 66.10
58. Om Prakash : Op. Cit., p. 18.
59. *Atharva Vēda :* V 19.5
60. Ibid : VI 70.1
Sathapatha Brahmana XIV 1.1.29
61. *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppatai* 305-310.
62. Balasundara Nayakkar, K. ; *A Critical Study on Perumpāṇāṟṟuppatai* (Journal of S. V. Oriental Institute XIII I-1952)

various kinds of pickles, which are mentioned as 'Kadi'. The Pāṇan who had had a taste of it before recommends "You would be fortunate enough to have the food consisting of many varieties with fresh and condensed curd and ghee" evidently recollecting the savour of the pickles enjoyed by him before.

Brahmins are spoken of as having been scrupulously clean. They were punctilious about their bath and wore washed clothes particularly at prayer time. They wore the sacred thread and were described as Dvijas (twice-born). Aiṅkuṟunūṟu describes some brahmins who had dressed their hair into front knots.[63] It does not seem to be a practice universally adopted by all brahmins.

In general they led pious and noble lives. Padiṟṟuppattu bears testimony to the fact that the brahmins never intended harm for others and never uttered falsehood.[64] High standards of moral conduct were their ideals. Their life, habits and customs helped them to realise the ideals. They adopted fasting at stated times and offered daily oblations and prayers at neighbouring shrines early in the morning.[65] They enjoyed royal patronage.

b) *Brahmins as Priests*: Tolkāppiyar describes the brahmins as "*Maruvil Muvahaikkālamum Neriyin Āṟṟiya Aṟivar*". This description lays emphasis on their capacity to divine the past, present and future. This equipment enabled them to command respect from the elite, kings and chieftains who consulted them whenever they ventured on a project like war. But their contact was not with the masses. The mass of the people had faith in the soothsayings of Vēlan.[66] The religion of the early Tamils in

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Garuda's complexion is made up of two colours-Red and white. This variety of paddy also has the same two colours and Ṣarasannam seems to have been erroneously translated as Rasannam.

63. *Ainkuṟunūṟu*: 202. Such brahmins are now variedly called Chōḻiya, Mukkāṇi. Dikshithar (Chidambaram) etc.

64. *Padiṟṟuppattu*: 21 and 31.

65. Ibid: 74

66. *Naṟṟiṇai*: 173, 258

general was an animistic one in which divine forces were conceived of as immanent within actual objects. These divine forces called AṆANKU were for the most part not personified as Gods. Though good at astrological predictions the Brahmins could not claim as much popularity as these indigenous soothsayers, though they partly succeeded in winning over the upper strata of society. The sphere of the vēdic ritual was different from that of the early Tamilian concepts of religion and ritual. Again there were only limited numbers of families and out of these few were good at astrological predictions. The science of rituals had not become complicated as in later times.

There were influential brahmin poets, But these poets were not priests. Elsewhere in India there was a close relationship between prayers and sacrifices. Those who composed the hymns and officiated at the sacrifices developed into an influential section. For instance the Rig-Vēda refers to the two jobs that is to the same poet-priest as composing of hymns and as officiating at sacrifices.[67] There already existed in the Tamil society a priestly class qualified by special knowledge and magical qualities.

c) *Conducting Vēdic sacrifices:* Royal patronage of the conduct of Vēdic sacrifices is patent from the many references in the classics. Avvaiyar, the poetess exhorts the three crowned kings and others assembled in the sacrificial hall of Perunaṟkkiḷḷi to realise that the land belonged to the saintly and to pour out flowers and gold with water into the out-stretched hands of the brahmins.[68] Kōvūr Kiḻār prays that Brahmins like Viṇṇandāyar, may stand as stable as the tall Himalayas, towering above the clouds.[69] The capital city itself is described as dark with the smoke rising from the sacrificial halls and public feeding houses.[70]

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67. *Rig Vēda*: VII. 58.1. Quoted by Potdar *"Sacrifice in the Rig Vēda"* p. 141: ("Yo anuchāno brahmaṇo yukta āsit kavit tatra Yajamanasya Samvit")

68. *Puṟanāṉūṟu*: 367

69. Ibid: 166

70. Ibid: 21

Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷuti,[71] Nedumcheliyan and Chōḷa Karikālan are noted patrons. Rājaśūyam Vēṭṭa Perunaṟkkiḷḷi performed Rājaśūya.[72] Padiṟṟupattu expatiates on the yāgas performed under the patronage of King Ādan, Perunchēral Irumpoṟai who had the title Palyānai Selkeḷukuṭṭuvan, Selvakkaḍuṅkōvāḷi etc.[73] Atiyamān Neḍumān Añci, Pārivaḷḷal and lesser chieftains are also extolled for their having munificently supported vēdic sacrifices and religion.[74] Chēramān Perunchēral Irumpoṟai, performed a 'Putrakāmēshti' (Sacrifice to obtain a son) as Daśaratha of Ayōdhya had done.[75] We have gleanings about the method of 'hōma' performed by the brahmin priests and the materials that were necessary for the performance. As many as twenty-one varieties of sacrifices seem to have been in vogue. Ghee was profusely poured over the sacrificial fire and "havis', (the cooked offerings of food) were also thrown into the Kuṇda.[76] 'Āhuti' the act of offering into fire is mentioned as 'Āvuḍi'.[77] People visited the sacrifical hall to worship the God Agni ('Thee'–fire). Ritual pavilions with Yūpa pillars fixed are also mentioned.[78] Chōṇāṭtu Punjāṟṟūr Pārppān Kauṇiyan–Viṇṇattāyan, is a famous brahmin to perform Vedic sacrifices on his individual account.[79]

Such descriptions in the classics suggest that these great sacrifices had essentially become a 'Court cult'. The competition from indigenous religious cults and practices had not been so challenging as to effectively check the Vēdic cult from becoming increasingly popular with the kings and chieftains. The native priests continued to be specialists in occult rites and cult

71. *Maduraikkānci* : 494-95.
72. *Puṟanāṉūṟu* : 16; 25, 366 and 377
73. *Padiṟṟuppattu* : 20 : 70 : 74
74. *Maduraikkānci* : 200-204.
75. *Padiṟṟuppattu* : 74
76. *Pnṟanaṉūṟu* 166 : 8-9
19-23
384 : 15-18
15 : 17-21
77. *Maduraikkānci* : 494-95
78. *Puṟanāṉūṟu* : 15 : 21
79. Ibid : 183

concerned with demons and prognostication. These cults which were widespread retained their popularity with the masses. Yet there is no reason to believe that the Brāhmaṇas suffered in any way because of competition or religious rivalry.

At this juncture, it is worthwhile considering certain facts concerning the sacrificial tradition in the Vēdic cult, that became a court cult in Tamiḻakam. The specialized training of the Brahmins was in the scriptures, primarily the Vēdas. The function of Vēdic ritual is the celebration of certain animal sacrifices at the fire altar. The great Vēdic sacrifice is that of the horse. It was the horse that gave the Aryans their superiority in battle and possibly their mobility as nomads. The emphasis upon the horse sacrifice (aśvamēdha) must necessarily date from the period when the horse was the most important domestic animal. In Tamiḻakam as far as productive economy was concerned the emphasis is upon cattle, pastured in herds. The only royal patron that we hear of having performed the Rājaśūya is Rājaśūyam Vēṭta Perunaṟkkiḷḷi. There is hardly a reference to the horse being sacrificed or a description of the Aśvamēdha.

The Aśvamēdha is pre-eminently a Kshathriya sacrifice, at which apparently a Kshathriya could officiate himself.[80] A symbolic wooden sword used at the sacrifice makes the king weaker than the Brahmana. It is only to make the king stronger than his enemies.[81] There could be no question whatsoever of Brahmana superiority except at the altar side. The Brahmin himself acknowledges that he is unsuited for kingship.[82] Perhaps the Aśvamēdha was not quite popular with the kings of Tamiliana' since they enjoyed the primary of place in the social hierarchy.

Another reason may be sought in the Tamilian kings' conception of 'Māvēntar' we do not hear in any context that the

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80. *Sathapatha Brahmana* V 1.1.12. "Truly whosoever sacrifices after becoming as it were a Brahmana"
(Sathapatha Brahmana XIII 4.1.1.)

81. Ibid : V 4.4.15

82. Ibid : I 1.12

kings wore the sacred thread of the twice born (Dvija). The Tamil kings and chieftains were not in this respect analogous to those of their counterparts in the North, who were Kshathriyas. They wore garlands (both totemic and military) while at court and in the field of battle. The Tamilian concept of kingship at this point of time seems to have been but an expanded form of independent chieftain. The Tamil Araśar were largely a group of war-like, rugged romantic tribal chieftains who held sway over terrains running from the hills to the sea and patronised learned men who sang ballads and panegyrics about them. Warfare was more or less an inevitable activity.

Thus, the original Tamilian concept of kingship seems to have been but an expanded form of independent chieftaincy. This attitude and the political complacency did not encourage the ideal of world-leadership. It was perhaps the Rāmāyaṇa that first generated the very idea of a possible over-lord (Indra or Rāvaṇēśvara) who could become the Rājādhirāja (Nāvēnthar) – the Sāmrāt or Ekrāt, of the entire Bharathavarsha whose motive for conquest was not the exploitation of the neighbour's resources but to get the verbal honour of being called the 'Sole Ruler'. This ideology formed the sheet anchor of the performance of Rājaśūya. The Araśar of Tamiḻakam on the other hand undertook 'Yāttirās of conquest' even upto the Himalayas. Even the smallest of the Chieftains was influenced by such an ideal. This concept and the attendant ambition of the Tamil ruler did not divert his attention to the performance of the horse-sacrifice and we find the Rājaśūya relatively less popular in Tamiḻakam of the Śaṅgam age.

Land gifts made to Brahmins in recognition of their services at the performance of sacrifices raises some interesting propositions. Reference to 'Pārpanachēris' had already been made.[83] This can be equated with the Brahmanagrama (Agrahārams in later days) of Buddha's time. It cannot be assumed that these chēris were populated by no one else but Brahmanas. These settlements no doubt were the result of royal patronage.

83. Vide Supra

Chēramān Āḍukōtpāṭṭu found a brahmin settlement in Kuttanad and Śelvakkatuṅkō dotted the land with numerous settlements from one end to the other.[84] Tax free villages were settled on groups of brahmins.[85] Āryapaḍai Kaḍantha Neduncheḻiyan gave two villages as a gift to certain brahmins. In such settlements the brahmins could have formed the majority. Perhaps they dominated economically too. The process of formation of such Pārpanachēris could only be conjectured. They might have begun as settlements created by brahmin enterprise, or they might have been designated by the state as areas given over to brahmins' occupation.

The practice of land-gifts to brahmins must have helped them to become economically powerful. In later days such gift land are designated as 'Brahmadeya lands'. The Brahmadeya institution is one of the most interesting developments in land-holding and deserves to be discussed at some length. We know very little about land-tenure of the Śaṅgam days. That the king was at liberty to give away the revenues is clear in the gifts of Imayavarampan and Nārmuḍi to their respective poets. References from Padiṟṟuppaṭtu will prove the practice of gifting land etc.

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84. *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* : Colophon to Pāṭtu IV and VII

85. Ibid : II Pathikam, 64

Poet	*King*	*Reward*	*No. of Pattu*
———	Utiyan	———	I
Kumattūr Kaṇṇanār	Imayavarampan Nedumchēralāḍan	Umbarkādu of (50 acres) and revenue of the southern half of the Empire for 38 yrs.	II
Pālai Gauthamanār	Palyānai Śel-Keḷukuttuvan	Expenses of Ten Vēdic sacrifices	III
Kāppiyāṟṟu-Kāppiyanār	Kaḷankōi-Kaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral	4000000 gold pieces and half the royal revenue	IV
Paraṇar	Śenkuttuvan	Revenue of Umbarkāḍu	V
Kākkaipātiniyār Naççeḷḷaiyar	Ādukōtpāttu-Chēralathan	9 Kappons and 1000000 Kāṇams for ornaments and a seat by his side	VI
Kapilar	Śelvakkatuṅkō-Vāḷi Āthan	100000 Kānams and all the lands that can be seen from the top of Nawa hill	VII
Ariśil kiḷār	Perunchēral Irumpoṟai	Delined 9000000 Kāṇams and the palace with the throne	IX
———	Yānaiḳkatchēy?	———	X

In the list cited above Pāḷai Gauthamanār, Paraṇar and Kapilar are brahmins. Kākkaipāṭiniyar Naççeḷḷayar is a woman and Ariśil Kiḻār evidently is a Veḷḷāla (Kiḻār). It is by no means possible to give any estimate of the proportion of the total wealth owned by brahmins in the absence of statistical evidence in our sources. But the above list prepared by perusing the Padiṟṟuppaṭṭu alone, is quite impressive. There is no doubt about the growing economic importance of the brahmins.

From the description repeated in stock phrases at many places in our sources, it is clear that the tract covered hundreds of acres. It was not an empty land, uninhabited by people, a jungle area to be initially cleared by the settler. The grants were the result of the donees' accomplishments. The donees are often described as brahmins learned in the Vēḍic texts and experts in the performance of rituals. The absolute grant of land with water and flowers must have been the origin of the 'Nirāṭṭipper' common in Kerala till the second half of the nineteenth century.[86] The beginning of the big land-lord (Janmi) might be traced to these rewards. We are concerned more with the settlement of the brahmins by Āḍukōtpāṟtu and Śelvakkatuṅkō (Brahmaśvam).

Such grants meant alienation of land with all the economic rights attendant thereupon to the Brahmanas. They do not mention the abandonment of administrative rights by the donors. The revenue of Umbarkāḍu was first gifted to Kumaṭṭūr Kaṇṇanār by Imayavaramban Nedumchēralāthan. Again Śeṅkuṭṭuvan gifted the same to Parṇar. Obviously Umbarkāḍu must have escheated to the donor, for Śeṅkuṭṭuvan to gift it again. This proves that administrative rights must have been retained by the King himself.

Instances like those of Chōṇāṟṟu Punjāṟṟūr Pārppan Kauṇiyan Viṇṇaṭṭāyan prove the affluence of a section of the brahmins. Likewise poets like Kapilar aud Paraṇar must have been rich commanding respect from the court and the commoners. They

86. Ibid : 13,30,75

stand comparable to the Mahāśālas in early Buddhist literature.[87] The possibility of large-scale alienation of farm lands to brahmins exempted from the usual taxes cannot be ruled out entirely in the Śaṅgam period,

d) **Study and Teaching:**

As noted earlier, occupationally, the Brahmana group had become heterogenous. On the grounds of occupational differentiation the texts distinguish between two significant classes. One adhered strictly to injunctions, the other followed a variety of non-priestly occupations (Vēḷa-Pārppan). Generally, brahmins taught the Vēdas to youngsters of their own caste and this was part of their duty.[88] This group claimed intellectual and lineage connection with some of the great ancient Rishis. In this way every such family could have functioned as a Vēdic school, which may be taken as a school of special knowledge.

There is, howcver no explicit mention of Vēdic schools or 'Gurukulas'. The terms Āchāriyan, Āśiriyan, and Āśān occur in the Classics, but the precise denotation of each one is not clear. Palyānai learnt the Aryan scriptures from Bharadvāja, while Śeṅkuttuvan entrusted the education of his son to Paraṇar.[89] The well-known instance is that of Kapilar educating and bringing up the daughters of Pāri, the Chieftain.[90] The brahmins learnt the language of the people and made them familiar with the Purāṇas and Purāṇic heroes.[91]

That the Upanishadic thoughts had also permeated into the land and filled the minds of learned men can very well be

87. *Dighanikaya*: Brahmana Dūtas I p. 128
Pariśas, Amaccas I p. 101

88. *Sathapatha Brahmana*: 1.6.2.4
Mookerji, R. K.: *Ancient 6 Indian Education* p. 36
Varuna was the teacher of his son Bhrugu,

89. *Paḍiṟṟuppattu*: Colophon to Pāṭṭu V.

90 The names of these daughters (Pārimakalir) are given as Aṅgavai and Śaṅgavai in Pārikāthai a later day work.

91. The Classics contain many references to Purāṇic themes and incidents.

deduced from the many references in the Śaṅgam Classics. The pen picture of the Sun God in Tirumurukāṟṟuppaḍai (1.2), presented in all "His majesty rising above the gently rippling bluish green waves of the sea, dispelling the deep darkness of the night, adored by millions in all parts of the world and inducing the world's activity and bringing light and pleasure to all" - has its exact parallel in the daily noon Sandhyāvandana prayer of every twice-born, when he looks at the Sun through a specially contrived opening between upraised fingers of his two hands.[92] God as the Sun and Light is the most universal figure adopted in all religions.

Position of the Brahmin in the Social hierarchy

The rank of primacy in the four-fold hierarchy is to Araśar and not to the brahmins. This hierarchy was not created at any point of time by the Fiat of any Gods, Kings or religious leaders or particular groups of people. It is the product of slow evolution by the intermingling of the people, who were in different stages of development and levels of civilisation and belonged to dissimilar ethnic stock and consequently was native to the soil.

The reasons, for the emergence of the Brahmins as a powerful social class are summarised by Max Weber who refers to the "nature of a genteel literate whose magical charisma rests on 'Knowledge' ".[93] Such knowledge was "magical" in content and ritualistic in form, deposited in a holy literature. written in a holy language remote from that of every day speech. They displayed pride in their education and unshakable trust in their 'special knowledge'. They were the major, if not the only source of satisfying the kings ardent desire to acquire legitimacy through ritual consecration and affiliation to their charisma made them invulnerable to heterodox attacks.

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92. The prayer from *Taittarēya Āraṇyaka*-4-42-5 runs as follows:
"Dyōkta Sūryam Diśō Yaudakān mahatōrṇavad,
Bibhrājamāns Salilaśya madhāt tamavisabho
Rōhitākṣa Sūryo Vipasyin manasāppunatu"

93. Max Weber: *The Religion of India* (Illinois, 1958) pp. 139-45

Heterodox attacks were not much in Tamiḻakam of the Śaṅgam days, though veiled contradictions of the brahmanic faith could be traced. Āryappaḍai - Kaḍantha Nedumjeḻiyan, the Pāṇḍyan king is the author of poem 183 of Puṟanāṉūṟu. The themes expressed by him are 1) Character and culture, the real measures of true greatness are to be acquired, whatever be the cost 2) Greatness or superiority of a person is determined more by his wisdom (cultivated by education) than by birth which determines caste. These sentiments are probably a conscious rejection of the social values which the brahmanical caste organisation of society was offering to Tamil society. It is to be noted that the author is a king. Perhaps royal patronage to the brahmins was not conditional nor was it unreserved and the chances of a brahmin asserting himself either as priest or preceptor was less than his compeer elsewhere in India. Early Brahminism, in Tamiḻakam, was therefore at a disadvantage in establishing a charismatic rapport with the court.

Nor could it secure the mystical veneration of the populace. Early Brahminism had to contend with the entrenched tribal beliefs and practices. Command of mystical veneration rested on two factors, religious faith and ritual operations. Inevitably, in primitive times the 'revolution' (social) had to take on a religious aspect. The actual mechanism of change could be only by preaching through the mouths of respected ascetic teachers. More than this in Tamiḻakam such change could occur only in places where the native forms are not well established and where the tendency to universal monarchy is growing rapidly. As had already been pointed out such opportunities were few and far between. We have also noticed that the brahmins themselves show tendencies of strong divergence from Vēḍic practices.

Extent and Nature of Brahmanic influence:

Tamiḻakam is a type-region of a responsive insular, culture pattern where every intrusive wave of culture overlapped upon its precursor and became ultimately, each of them, part of the resident culture. The civilisation of the Śaṅgam period probably had its origin, much earlier.................earlier perhaps than the

last three centuries B.C. Within its boundaries, Tamil culture developed a sheltered character. The Śaṅgam classics are full of references to high rectitude and other qualities of head and heart of the Brahmins of the age. The sudden onslaught on Tamiḻakam of the Kaḷabar is held to have been cataclysmic and was apparently of a pre-datory type and not necessarily anti-brahmanical.[94] The Śaṅgam Classics, by their subject matter seem to be suggestive of a kind of ill-assimilated admixture of 'Aryan ritual' and other elements into the indigenous matrix.

The cults of the indigenous people had been already imported by the Dravidian speaking elements. They had a hard core of "Northern concepts". The sea-God, the hill-God, the God of war and the like appear to be vestiges of 'Aryanism'.[95] It was the basal matrix already underlying the Dravidian stratum that had conferred on them a local flavour. The religion of the Early Tamils is described as a "group of myths and cults with an indigenous colour imparted to them after the concepts had come into their fold and were at best forms of folklore, operating under a combination of naturalistic, animistic and totemistic features".[96]

This description by Nilakanda Sastri does not seem to reflect the picture that we get from evidences in Śaṅgam Literature. The early Tamil literature is almost wholly lacking in mythology. The religion of the Early Tamils was an animistic one in which divine forces were conceived of as immanent within actual objects and as potentially harmful. Brahmanic influence of changing the complex of the 'Divine Cult' is very little felt during the Śaṅgam epoch.

The 'magical charisma resting on Knowledge' considered to be a potent cause for the growth of the influence of the Brahmin

94. Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. : *History of Tamil language and Literature*-(Beginning to 1000 A.D.) Madras, 1956

95. The most ancient group of northern 'Dikpalas' consisted of Kubēra, Varuna, Indra and Yama

96. Nilakanta Sastri, K. A. : *Lecture on Murugan* at the Archaeological Society of South India 22.9.64

was conspicuous by its absence in Tamiḻakam of the Śaṅgam age. The performance of rituals at every stage of growth of an individual from birth to death did not depend on brahmin guidance or assistance. The worship in temples and temple rituals did not depend on the brahmin either.

However the belief in the 'Reincarnation of souls' had influenced Tamilian society. The concept has also been designated "Re-birth", "Transmigration of souls" and even "Samsara" without minding the differences in the shades of meaning conveyed by each term individually. The Upanishadic philosophy contended that the soul of a man who died did not (barring the exceptional case of one who at death returned to indistinguishable one-ness with Brahman) pass into a permanent state of being in Heaven or Hell or elsewhere.[97] It was reborn into another existence which would terminate in due time and necessitate another birth. Rebirth followed re-birth in an endless chain with a single exception. Rebirth might occur for a finite period of time in any of the series of heavens or hells, upon earth in any of the forms of life-vegetable, animal or human. It may be higher or lower than the present or any past existence. A belief in such a doctrine did not involve any transgression of social moors and caste-observances. Its absorption into local cults was easy.

Poygayār the author of kaḻavaḻi and Puṟanāṉūṟu-74 had sung of Kōchcheṅgaṇān the choḻa, who is believed to have been a spider in his previous birth.[98] Kapilar, the brahmin poet on the eve of his fasting unto death, regretting his failure to die along with his friend Pāri, expresses his conviction that he is sure to be reborn as Pāri's friend in the next life also to fulfill his duty.[99] BūthaPāṇdyan too expresses his belief in rebirth.[100] The

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97. *Chandōgya Upanishad*: 5-10.7
Cf. *Manu* XII 9 and 54: *Maitri Upanishad* 14

98. Thiruvālaṅkāḍu Plates.
Appar the Saivite poet also refers to the story (7th Century A.D.)

99. *Puṟanāṉūṟu*: 236

100. Ibid: 246

practice of erecting hero-stones and offering worship to the same is the result of the belief of the spirit inhabiting the stone.

The acceptance of the doctrine by the Tamil society by and large did not make them follow the ritual practices of Brahminism attendant on death. The rites connected with the dead are based on the Garuḍa Purāṇa, according to which the libations of the ten days are said to help the growth of the body of the soul. The rites are so deviced to ensure the safe journey of the soul and on an intricate philosophy of 'Life after death'. Though cremation was practised by a section of the people burial was more in vogue as evidenced by the archaeological discovery of variety of burial urns. Urn burials represent by far the most dominant custom as described in the Śaṅgam works-*Naṟṟiṇai, Padiṟṟuppaṭtu* and *Puṟanāṇūṟu.*[101]

There are also references to cremation in the Anthologies. Puṟanaṇūṟu verse 231 (Ll 1-4) by Avvaiyār on the death of the Chief Neḍumān Añci, verse 240 (LI 7-10) by Kuṭṭuvan Kiranār on the death of Vēḷ-Chief Aye, verse 244 (Ll 1-7) by the Chēra King Mākkōdai who later died at Kōttambalam on the death of his queen, could be cited as examples. Verse 246 by the queen Būtha Pāṇdyan on the occasion of her Sati on the death of her Lord and Verse 363 says: "more numerous on the sands of the sea-shore are the kings who ruled this vast earth girdled by the great sea, who went away as the lords of the burning ground without possessing even as much as an 'Udai leaf'-an example of littleness". Though cremation finds mention as method of the disposal of the dead, the attendant brahmanic rituals do not find mention in the Anthologies. 'Knowledge', the non-material possession of the brahmins seems to have had a greater diffusion potentiality, among the Śaṅgam Tamils than the rituals based on acquisition of maṭerial possession.

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101. *Naṟṟiṇai* : 271
Paḍiṟṟuppattu : 44
Puṟanāṇūṟu : 228, 238, 256.

The quantum of Brahmanical influence on Śangam Tamils have been variously assessed by different scholars. Kanakasabhai holds the brahmins responsible for making a conscious attempt 'to foist their system on the Tamils![102] His observations exercised a great influence upon the writings of later scholars such as V. A. Smith and L. D. Barnett. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai in his 'Chronology of Early Tamils' repeated the charge and similar views were expressed by K. P. Padmanabha Menon in his 'History of Kerala'.[103] Other scholars like V. R. R. Dikshitar emphasised the role of the Aryans, brāhmaṇas or sanskrit in the development of Tamil culture.[104] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar emphatically asserted that even the earliest Tamil literature showed influence of Sanskrit: He wrote "............the earliest grammarians of Tamil were Brahmanas and their first teachers of philosophy were also Brahmins".[105] Another writer declared that "the Tamilians were practically, only "Southern Aryans" and they called one another as they do even to-day, "Ayya" or "Arya" in its Tamil form.[106] Subrahmanian says that the introduction of the caste-system into the Tamil country meant only two things-the superiority of the Brahmanas and the organisation of the professions on a hereditary basis.[107] As far as the evidences in Śaṅgam literature go this is not wholly true. The Brahmins were playing an useful role in transforming the tribal society into a rural caste-society through acculturation. Their pre-eminent success was in the spread of knowledge and not in popularisation of rituals. There is no ambiguity in the literary evidence itself in the matter. Inspite of a steady and well meaning

102. Kanakasabhai, V: Op. Cit., pp. 116, 238-39

103. (Ernakulam, 1924) 56 ff.

104. Ramachandra Dikshithar, V. R. : *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, (Reprint, Madras 1936) p. 338

105. *Tamil Studies : Essays on the Histaty of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature.* (Madras, 1914) p. 42 ff.

106. Panchapakesa Ayyar, A. S. : *The Story of Manimekalai* (Vellore 1943) p. VI

107. Op. Cit., pp. 255 ff., 261, 273, 260.

permeation of the brahmanic ideals though not way of life and rituals, there is no evidence that Tamils were subjected to any element either of compulsion or social discrimination of a deliberate kind proceeding from the incoming groups. The enthusiasm with which the already considerably synthesised and liberalised Āryan myth, religion and social behaviour pattern were slowly imbibed in the Tamil country has an obvious measure of spontaneity in it. Institutionally, hierarchically and socio-culturally the 'northern trends' were consciously assimilated. The transformation wrought on the Tamil scene was already an accomplished fact and one which did not certainly leave the Tamil people aggrieved or protesting.

GAṆAPPERUMAKKAḶ

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Introduction: In early days also, the *Ūr* or the village had an executive body called *āḷuṅgaṇam*. It means 'the ruling group' of the *Ūr* or the village. Some times it is shortened into *gaṇam* or expanded into *mī–vāḷum-gaṇam.*[1] The numerical strength of this executive and the manner of its appointment are not known.[2] We also find the term *Ūr–āḷvārgaḷ* which is doubtless another way of describing the *āḷuṅgaṇam.*[3] Some of the *sabhas* also appear to have had this form of a simple executive which was responsible for all matters happening in the village.

Gaṇa: Sir Monier William's "A Sanskrit-English Dictionary" gives the detailed meaning of the word *Gaṇa*. According to him the word *Gaṇa* means 'a flock, troop, multitude, number, tribe, series, class (of animate or inanimate beings), body of followers or attendants, troops or classes of inferior deities (especially certain troops of demi–gods considered as Śiva's attendants and under the special superintendence of the God Gaṇēsa), a single attendant of Śiva. a company, any assemblage or association of men formed for the attainment of the same aims'. It also gives the meaning 'a sect in philosophy or religion'.[4]

According to Bloom Field's "Vedic Concordance" the word 'gaṇa' means '*mē mā vi tṛsan*'. *Gaṇam* means '*dēvānām ṛbhavaḥ Suhastāḥ*' and it also means '*astoṣy ēṣām na cob hase*'.[5]

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1. A.R.E. Nos. 3 and 58 of 1898
2. K. A. Nilakanda Sastri, 'The Chōḷas', p. 494
3. A.R.E. No. 40 of 1895
4. Sir Monier William: 'A Sanskrit-English Dictionary'
5. Bloom Field: 'Vedic Concordance', p. 342

According to Manu the term *Gaṇa* refers to people or guild. In the *Mahābhāratha* the term is used in relation to a political self-governing corporation. According to Rhys Davids the term *gaṇa* indicates a group, collection or corporation of a few men who have a common purpose. Jayaswal refers to certain *gaṇas* in relation to religious corporation. The Jaina sūtras contain references to *gaṇas* founded by individuals. There are '*Godasa-Gaṇa*; Gaṇa founded by Godasa, 'the *Uttara-Vālissaha Gaṇa*,' founded by Uttara and Vālissaha conjointly and the *Uddēha-Gaṇa* set up by Rōhaṇa.[6] Religious *gaṇas* in Tamil are the Srikrishna-gaṇattār, Vivagaṇattār and the Kaligaṇattār.[7]

Āḷuṅgaṇam - Āḷuṅgaṇattār: The term *Gaṇa* is used in the sense of a group of people in charge of administration in the Pallava inscriptions. *Āḷuṅgaṇam* means 'the executive committee of the village and *āḷuṅgaṇattār*, the managing or ruling committee. One of the early Pallava inscriptions mentioning '*āḷuṅgaṇattār*' is that dated in the 23rd regnal year of Nandivarman Pallavamala.[8] It is recorded that Mullu Kilar, one of the ruling members of the committee of Tiruvippurambedu purchased by a deed of sale, a field from Kaniyar Agnisarma of Kulaippatur, another member of the ruling committee of the same village and bestowed it on the Śiva temple of the same locality. We have also references of *āḷuṅgaṇattār* in the inscriptions of Dantivarman, Nripattunga-varman and Vijaya Kampavarman.[10]

The Uttaramērūr inscription gives the complete description of the working of the ruling committee.[11] The members of the committee (*āḷuṅgaṇattār*) of Uttaramērūr were Brahmins.

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6. Dr. C. Minakshi: 'Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas', p. 150, ed. 1938
7. K. A. Nilakanda Sastri: 'Studies in Chōḷa History', p. 102
8. Ep. Ind., Vol. XI, p. 225
9. Ibid: 'Thiruvippurambedu—āḷumgaṇatharuḷ—Kaliyamangala-kilai'
10. S.I.I. Vol. XII; No. 107
11. A.R.E. Nos. 3 and 58 of 1898

The inscriptions at Mānūr[12] and Kalattūr[13] (Arakkoṇam Taluk) also mentions the committee (*āḷuṅgaṇattār*).

The inscription at Ālambākkam registers a member of the āḷuṅgaṇa of the *sabha* in Dantivarman-mangalam gave 16 kalañju of gold to the temple of Amarēśvaraperumāḷ for a perpetual lamp.[14]

The inscription in Varadarājaperumaḷ temple at Ālambākkam records an endowment of 3 *ma* of land situated below the Mārpidugēri (tank) by Kaṇḍēru Saṉṉapperumāḷ Somāji (Somāyāji), a member of the āḷuṅgaṇam of Dantivarmanmañgalam, a brahmadēya, for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the temple of Tirumēṟṟalaperumāḷ in the village.[15]

Amṛita Gaṇa: It is held by some scholars that the body Amṛitagaṇattār acted as a subordinate committee to the Āḷuṅgaṇattār for certain purposes.[16] The term appears in the inscriptions of Aparājitavarman in Thiruvoṟṟiyūr only There is no reference to amṛita gaṇa in earlier Pallava records or later in Chōḷa inscriptions. The inscriptions dated in the 4th and 7th regnal years of Aparājita recording gifts of gold to the temple show that they were given to the *sabha* of Ādambākkam and the Amṛitagaṇa received the gold.[17]

Gaṇapperumakkaḷ: The term '*Gaṇapperumakkaḷ*' is the same as the ruling committee. Nripatungavarman's 16th regnal year inscription of Paramēśvaramañgalam which registers a gift of gold for offering to the God at Sailēśvara on interest.[18]

12. Ep. Ind. Vol. XXII
13. A.R.E. Nos. 155 and 158 of 1916
14. S.I.I. Vol. XIX, No. 127
15. S.I.I. Vol. XIX, No, 281
16. Dr. C. Minakshi: 'Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas', p. 132
17. S.I.I. Vol. XII, Nos. 88 and 91.
18. A.R.E. No. 257 of 1912

Rājarājakēsarivarman alias Rājarājadēva's 27th regnal year inscription of Brahmadēsam registers a gift of 10 kalañju or 90 sheep for a lamp to the temple of Pōṇdai-Āḷvār in Karaikkōṭṭu-Brahmadēyam alias Parākramasōla Chaturvēdimangalam, a village in Dāmar-kādu of Dāmar-kōṭṭam which was a sub-division of Jayagoṇḍaśōḷamaṇḍalam. This was left in charge of the Gaṇapperumakkaḷ who looked after the *Srikārya* for the year.[19]

Kaṇṇaradēva, a Rāshṭrakūta king's 17th regnal year inscription of Brahmadēsam, registers a gift of gold for a lamp to the temple of Pōṇdaipperumānaḍigaḷ at Rājamalla-chaturvēdimaṅgalam in Tiruvēgāmbapuram, a village in Dāmar-kōṭṭam by Mārudānamai Virasuta Bhōgavardhana Narasimhayya. It was placed in charge of the Gaṇapperumakkaḷ of the temple.[20]

Madiraikoṇḍa Parakēsarivarman's 25th regnal year inscription of the above mentioned place registers a gift of gold for a lamp by a native of Māṅgāḍu. The Gaṇapperumakkaḷ had to see to the burning of it.[21]

Tiruchengōdu inscriptions of Parakēsarivarman and other Chōḷas mention the various committees of the Gaṇapperumakkaḷ. All committees are related to the temple.

Tiruvōṇagaṇapperumakkaḷ : Parakēsarivarman's 9th regnal year inscription of Tiruchengōdu records an endowment of 20 kalañju of gold deposited with the Tiruvōṇagaṇapperumakkaḷ by one Araṭṭan Nakkaṇ's son on behalf of Maṇikaṇti Odaiyamandāl, a lady residing at Īrodu (Erode) for feeding 20 Brāhmanas once every month probably on the Tiruvōṇam day.[22]

Tiruvādirai Gaṇapperumakkaḷ : Rajakēsarivarman's 14th regnal year inscription of Tiruchengōdu registers an endowment of 20 kalañju of gold by the Kāseṭṭaṅgal for feeding 20 Brāhmans on the day of Ārdrā every month, by Mūri Kāmakkaṇār, the wife

19. A.R.E. No. 204 of 1915
20. A.R.E. No. 207 of 1915
21. A.R.E. No. 222 of 1915
22. S.I.I. Vol. XIX, No. 219

of Iḷaṅgōṇ adigaḷ on behalf of a person named Ekavīra Divakaradēvar. This name which sounds very much like a surname was probably the title of Eḷaṅgōṇadigaḷ himself. The gift was accepted by a body called the Tiruvādiraigaṇapperumakkaḷ.

Parakēśarivarman's 26th regnal year inscription of Tiruchengōḍu records a gift of 5 kalañju of gold deposited with the Tiruvādirai Gaṇapperumakkaḷ for feeding with the interest there on five Brāhmanas on the day of Tiruvādirai every month by Kāḍan Pūdi Māṇikkam in the name of his daughter Muṇḍarikōṇ.

Dvādaśi Ganapperumakkaḷ: Parakēśarivarman's 27th regnal year inscription of Tiruchengōḍu records an endowment made by Kukāri Sundari, wife of a native of Pugaḷḷyūr for feeding Brāhmanas on the days of Dvādaśi through the agency of Dvādaśi Gaṇapperumakkaḷ.

Tiruvēkādaśi Gaṇapperumakkaḷ: Rajakēśarivarman's 13th regnal year inscription of Tiruchengōdu records an endowment of 20 kalañju of gold by Kasettangal (Kāseṭṭānkal, which probably signifies that a kalañju of gold was equivalent to 8 kāśu in weight) left in charge of the Paṇṇ randu-nāṭṭuperumakkaḷ of Tiruchengōḍu by Kāmakkanār, wife of Ilaṅgōṇḍadigaḷ, for feeding 20 Brahmins on the days of Ekādaśi. The gift was to be administered by the Tiruvēkādaśi Gaṇapperumakkaḷ who appear to have formed part of the assembly.

The above mentioned inscriptions of Tiruchengōdu record the gift of gold by individuals of the surrounding villages to the respective Gaṇapperumakkaḷ, for feeding brāhmins on the days of Dvādaśi, Tiruvādirai, Tiruvōnam and Tiruvēkādaśi every month in the temple.

Conelusion: From the above mentioned evidences we come to the conclusion that the Gaṇapperumakkaḷ were important persons in village and in the temple. They were given an important place in the temple administration as well as in the society.

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23. S.I.I. Vol. XIII, No. 244
24. S.I.I. Vol XIX, No. 426
25. S.I.I. Vol. XIX; No. 427
26. S.I.I. Vol. XIII, No. 232

RESEARCH ON MORTAR-MIX USED IN PANDYA AND CHOLA PERIOD TEMPLES

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Mortar is used to bind together the stones or bricks of the walls of a structure or as plaster to provide smooth bard surface. What is required for mortar is obviously some substance that will harden and adhere strongly to brick or stone for putting these materials together in a structure. Lime which was the Chief ingredient in all mortars in ancient times has this perculiar property.

I. Pāṇḍyan Period Temple Mortar:

Sri. Chockkalingēṣwara temple at Ukkirankōttai about 30 Kms. from Tirunelveli was built during the region of Paranthaka Nedunchadyan (A.D. 768-815). Ukkitankōttai was an important place during Pāṇḍyan rule. This shrine was built mostly of granite stone and bricks and the binding substance was Lime Mortar. The analysis of Lime Moṛtar showed that besides lime and Sand, Palmgur (Karuppatti) a very small quantity of Honey (Kombu Thaen) were the chief ingredients mixed in the form of Syrup. The presence of sucrose and dextrose in the mortar, estabiished this factor. It was also noted that out of seven varieties of Honey, only the Kombuthaen (கொம்புத்தேன்) is fit for the binding purposes.

II. Chōḷa-Period Temple Mortar:

Close to the Kanyakumari Railway station, there is a Chōḷa Temple built during the days of Rāja Rāja I (A.D. 985-1014). In the 10th Century A.D. the Pāṇḍyan territory was conquerred by the Chōḷas.

The orignal temple dedicated to Sri. Guhanāthaswami consists of the Garbhagraha and the Ardhamaṇḍapa. The

temple abounds in the original "Devakōshta" sculptures, This shrine was built mostly of granite stone and bricks and the binding substance was lime Mortar.

Analysis of lime Mortar revealed that Marmelos (Fruit of the Vilvam tree) must have been used. The gummy mucous like substance surrounding the seeds serves as a good adhesive. When mixed with lime it is used as a cement and the mixture sets firmly in short time.

The trace of copper sulphate in the Mortar indicate the Chōḻas used this probably to prevent possible damage by Fungi moss etc. It might have also been used to give extra strength to the mortar.

Lime, sand and Palmgur had also been used in the Mortar. With the ageing of the temple the sugary taste of the sucrose has lessened but not the binding capacity, the analysis showed.

FISH MORTAR

Experiments have shown that adhesive strength of the Lime Mortar can be increased to 0.45 Kg. per Sq. cm., by adding Tilapia Fish.

Tilapia is an imported species from African Countries and the Zoological name is Tilapia Mossambica. It is the Cheapest Variety available and a fast breeder.

Mortar strength is due to Fish body proteins especially muscle proteins or myosin which may work as the binding factor in addition to exudate and exreted materials in the water.

In the process, it was fouud that the chopped Tilapia fish found to give more adhesive strength in the Lime Mortar than the full fish.

VEENA CONCERT

The Institute of Traditional Cultures organised a Veena concert by Dr. S. Seetha, Professor & Head, Department of Indian Music, University or Madras on 23—10—1980. She was accompanied on the Mṛdaṅgam by Thiru K. R. Ganesh. The function began with the welcome speech by Dr. K. K. Pillai. The details of the concert are as follows:

1. The varnam "Intamoḍi" in the rāga Sāraṅga, set to Ādi tāḷa by 'Tiruvottiyūr Tyāgayyar.'
2. "Mahāgaṇapatim" of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar in Nata raga and Ādi tāḷa followed by rendering of Kalpana svaras.
3. "Baṇṭurīti" of Tyāgarāja in Hamsanādam rāga and Ādi tāḷa.
4. Ālāpana in Aṭhāṇā rāga, followed by a kṛti "Nārada gānalola" of Tyāgarāja in Rūpaka tāḷa.
5. Detailed ālāpanā and tānam in Bhairavi, rāga followed by Svāti Tirunāḷ's krti "Janani Māmava" in Misra Cāpu tāḷa with Neraval and Kalpanāsvaras.
6. Ālāpanā of Hemavati rāga followed by the kṛti "Śrī Kāntimatim" of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar in Ādi tāḷa,
7. "Palukavademirā" of Tyāgarāja in Deva manohari rāga and Ādi tāḷa.
8. Ālāpanā of Pantuvarāḷi rāga followed by the kṛti "Visālākṣi" in Miśra Cāpu tāḷa.
9. Āḷāpanā of Kānaḍā rāga followed by Tyāgarāja's kṛti "Srī Nārada" in Rūpaka tāḷa.
10. The composition "Ambā Nilāmbari" of Ponnayya Pillai in Nilāmbari rāga and Ādi tāḷa.
11. Ālāpanā in Surati rāga followed by a Jāvali "Veganivu" of Ramnaḍ Śrīnivāsa Ayyangar in Rūpaka tāḷa.
12. Brief ālāpana of Señjuruṭṭi rāga followed by Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar's kṛti "Ganēsa pāhimam".
13. "Niraimadi", Tiruppugaḷ in Hamsānandi rāga and Ādi tāḷa.

The function concluded with presentation of vote of thanks to the Artists and the audience by Dr. K. K. Pillai.

VEENA CONCERT

[illegible] Institute [illegible] organised a Veena [illegible] by Dr. [illegible] Professor [illegible] Head, Department of [illegible] University of [illegible] 1962–63 [illegible] was [illegible] Music [illegible] The [illegible] by Dr. [illegible]

The details of the concert are as follows:

1. The [illegible] to the raga [illegible] by [illegible]
2. [illegible] in Pala [illegible] and [illegible]
3. [illegible] in [illegible] followed by a kriti [illegible] in Ragha [illegible]
4. Dr. [illegible] followed by [illegible] in [illegible] Tala [illegible] and [illegible]
5. Kirtana [illegible] kriti [illegible]
6. [illegible] and [illegible]
7. [illegible] kriti [illegible]
8. [illegible] followed by [illegible] kriti [illegible]
9. [illegible]
10. [illegible] followed by a kriti [illegible]
11. [illegible] followed by [illegible]
12. [illegible] in [illegible] raga and [illegible] tala.

The [illegible] concluded with [illegible] of vote of thanks to the Artists and the audience by Dr. K. K. [illegible]

REPORTS OF SEMINARS

The Institute of Traditional Cultures held a seminar at 5 P.M. on Friday the 6th August 1976 in Room No. 48 of the Madras University Departmental Buildings on "Role of Poets of Tamil Nadu in the Society through the Ages" led by Thiru K. M. Venkataramiah, M.A., B.O.L., The following is the report of the proceedings of the seminar.

Present:

Dr. K. K. Pillay, M.A., D.Litt., D.Phil (Oxon) in Chair.

Thiru K. M. Venkataramiah, M.A., B.O.L.

An audience of about 50 persons was present.

The Chairman introduced the Leader and requested him to lead the seminar.

Thiru K. M. Venkataramiah: In my talk on the "*Role of Poets in the Society in Tamil Nadu through the Ages,*" I confine myself to the Tamil Poets, without even referring to the scholiasts or the grammarians.

A poet of the Sangam age called Mutukaṇṇaṉ cāttaṉār of Uṟaiyūr sang a verse on Cōḷan Nalaṅkiḷḷi. Therein he said that those who lived with fame and had the fortune to be sung by poets were very few and that those famous men who were sung by poets would reach the celestial abode by the automotive plane.

"Pulavar pāṭum pukaḻuṭaiyōr vicumpiṉ
Valavaṉ ēvā vāṉavūrti eytupa."

Hence kings, chieftains and others entertained a dire desire that they should be sung by poets. Whenever the poets sang them they profusely rewarded them, which would be seen from the colophons to each ten of Patiṟṟuppattu – the Ten Tens.

The poets always maintained their dignity as doyen scholars. If they suspected that they were not properly honoured, they

refused to accept the presents offered to them. There was a chieftain called Veḷimāṉ whom one Peruñcittiraṉār approached for some presents. Veḷimāṉ unwillingly bade his brother to offer presents to the poet. The Iḷaveḷimāṉ gave scanty presents which the poet refused to accept.

It is also believed that if the poets were dishonoured evil would befall them and an instance has been given by Kapilar in one of his verses on Iruṅkōvēḷ. There was a bard called Kaḷāttalaiyār. It seems Kaḷāttalaiyār was dishonoured by one of the ancestors of Iruṅkōvēḷ and the result was the natural destruction of Araiyam their capital city. By this incident, it should not be construed that the poets were dreaded and disposed off by offering presents. The chieftains or kings were, as a matter of fact, proud of their company.

A poet called Muṭamōdiyār of Eṇicceri, a hamlet of Uṟaiyūr was in company with a Cera King called Antuvaṉ Cēral Irumpoṟai in his palace called Vēṇmāṭam at Karūr. The poet saw that a Cōla King Perunaṟkiḷḷi, mounted on his elephant, was proceeding towards Karuvūr. The Cēra King thought that the Cōḷa was proceeding with an ulterior motive. The poet gauging this, told the Cēra King that it was due to the elephant of the Cōḷa King becoming mad and uncontrollable and averted a disaster.

Avvaiyār was the court bard of Atikamāṉ Neṭumāṉ añci. The Atikamāṉ once got a fruit called Nelli, the characteristic of the fruit being the elongation of the life time of the eater of the fruit. But Atikamāṉ, not revealing this feature to the poet, offered the fruit to Avvaiyār with the intention that the poet was better fitted to live long, Avvaiyār having come to know this only after she tasted the fruit, with ecstatic joy, composed impromptu a verse blessing Atikamāṉ to live long like Him who wore the crescent moon in the head and whose throat resembled the blue jewel :—" Piṟainutal polinta ceṉṉi Nila maṇi miṭaṟṟoruvaṉ pōla maṉṉuka peruma ".

There was another bard Mōci Kīran by name, Once he happened to go to the court of a Cēra King Peruñcēral Irumpoṟai. It so happened that the royal Drum was taken out in procession for being cleansed. The poet owing to exhaustion, wanted to relax for a while and being attracted by an empty couch nearby, stepped into it and fell asleep. The Cēra King returned and saw the respectful bard resting in the cot of the royal Drum. One should expect the intruder to be cut to pieces but what had really happened. The Cēra fanned him till the poet arose from his sleep. The bard, being very much astonished to see the courtesy and love showered upon him by the King, extemporized a verse which has been preserved in Puṟam Four Hundred.

It seems that there prevailed enmity between Atikamāṉ Netumāṉ añci and Toṇṭaimāṉ. To patch up their difference Atikamāṉ sent Avvaiyār as an envoy to the court of Toṇṭaimāṉ. Thinking it would terrify Avvaiyār, Toṇṭaimāṉ led her to the armory where the weapons of war had been arranged in a tidy and attractive manner. Avvaiyār was a great diplomat. She improvised a verse wherein she stated that all the weapons of war of Toṇṭaimāṉ had been arranged and ostentatiously displayed there as if in an exhibition, whereas the armory of Atikamāṉ, by being incessantly used in successive wars, had become unfit for immediate use and were being repaired expeditiously. By such an expression Avvaiyār meant that Toṇṭaimaṉ's arms remained unused, that the warriors were untrained to handle them, whereas Atikamāṉ's soldiers were well trained to handle them in the warfront. This resulted invariably in truce.

Pēkaṉ was one of the seven celebrated munificent patrons of the Sangam, Age and as ill luck would have it, he deserted his wife Kaṇṇaki for some time. Kapilar, Peruṅkuṉṟūr Kiḻār and Aricil Kiḻār pleaded on behalf of the forsaken lady and made them live together.

Aricil Kiḻār was the author of the eighth ten of the Ten tens. That ten was sung on Takaṭūr Eṟinta Peruñcēral Irumpoṟai, who, immensely pleased with the composition, stepped down

from the throne and handed over his sovereignty to him as benefaction. Aricilkiḷār refrained from accepting this benevolence, requested the benefactor to take over the sovereign power and became his minister.

Once there was a scuffle between Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neṭuṅkiḷḷi. Nalaṅkiḷḷi was entrapped in his fort while it was beseiged by Neṭuṅkiḷḷi. One Kōvūrkiḷār wanted to pacify them. Hence he improvised some verses to this effect wherein he argued that both belonged to the same clan, and if one should loose, it was the Cēra who was defeated, that both could never win and as this would result in laughter, it would be better if they had abstained from waging war. Indeed the conflict ended.

There was a Cōla King called Kiḷḷivaḷavan̲, later on known as one that died at Kuḷamuṟṟam. He wanted to put an end to the lives of the Children of Malaiyamān̲. An elephant was brought in to trample them to death. As they were infants, they were struck with panic at the sight of the assemblage, but they abstained from crying at the sight of the elephant. Kōvūr Kiḷār, a celebrated bard, intervening said that as the Children were the descendants of Malaiyamān̲, a person of unbounded munificence, they should be spared. On hearing him, those children were set free.

A poet Iḷantattan̲, was suspected by Neṭuṅkiḷḷi to be the spy of Nalaṅkiḷḷi and hence he was sentenced to death. Kōvūr Kiḷār intervened and said :-

'Just as the birds fly to a far off place in search of fruit-bearing trees, the poets also go in search of munificent men, and sing as best as they can. They accept whatever given to them; they feed their relatives and friends and lead such a life that result not in doing harm to others. On account of their scholarship they march into the courts of Kings with head lifted aloft and would seem to rank themselves with royalty.' – On hearing this piece of advice, Netuṅkiḷḷi changed his mind.

From the fore-going narration, one may think that most of the poets or bards were wanderers and they lived after the

benevolence of Kings or Chieftains. It was not so. They seemed to have been engaged in various occupations in Tamiḻakam and this is perceivable from their names.

Uṟaiyūr Iḷampoṉ vāṇikaṉār was indeed a gold merchant;

Taṅkāl pūṇ kollaṉār was a jeweller;

Maruttuvaṉ Tāmōtaraṉār was a doctor or physician;

Kaṇiyaṉ pūṅ Kuṉṟaṉ was an astrologer;

Neṭum palliyattaṉār was a great musician capable of playing on several musical instruments;

Aṟuvai vāṇikaṉ Iḷavēttaṉār was a cloth merchant;

Maturaik kaṇakkāyaṉār was a teacher;

Pālāciriyaṉ was perhaps a tutor to children;

Maturaikkūlavāṇikaṉ cittalaiccāttaṉār was a dealer in groceries;

Maturaittamiḻkkūttaṉār was an authority on Tamil Dramaturgy;

Vaṭama vaṇṇakkaṉ Pēri cāttaṉār was a 'vaṇṇakkaṉ' who was engaged in testing the validity of coins.

Tiruvalluvar is the only Tamil poet who is well known throughout the world owing to his famous treatise, the Kural. Some opine that he got his name by the office he held. According to a nighantu "Valluvan and Sakkai" are names that denote the post of the Private Secretary to the King. Hence it may be with confidence observed that Tiru valluvar occupied an exalted and dignified post in the government of Tamiḻakam of yore.

Although the poets were engaged in various trades and occupations, they were erudite scholars of unequivocal merit and fame and were very popular both in the higher and lower ranks in society. They were not mere bards; they did not sing simply to extol the patron kings who were mostly their comrades attached to one another by affection, regard and esteem. Even while they sang on Akam theme they tried to introduce historical material as the back ground of the theme of their poems.

One or two instances would suffice.

We find a King-poet named Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ of Talaiyālaṅkāṉam fame. The war at Talaiyālaṅkāṉam has also been referred to in some of the copper plate grants of the Pāṇḍiyas. Whom did Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ win in the battle? It is in Akam poetry we get the answer. While talking of the spread of *Alar* (the idle talk of women about the lovers), it is equalled to the uproar that spread far and wide when the Pāṇḍiya won his enemies at Talaiyālaṅkāṉam. The names of the vanquished are given in the following lines :-

" Ālaṅkāṉattakaṉṟalai civappac
Cēral cempiyan ciṉaṅkeḻu Titiyaṉ
Pōrval yāṉaip polampūṇ Eḻiṉi
nārari naṟaviṉ Erumai yūraṉ
tēṅkamaḷ akalattup pularnta cāntiṉ
Iruṅkō Vēṇmāṉ Iyal tērpporunaṉ eṉṟu
eḻuvar nalvalam aṭaṅka"

(They were 1. the cēra, 2. the Cōḻa, 3. Titiyaṉ, 4. Eḻini, 5. Erumaiyūraṉ, 6. Iruṅkōvēḷmāṉ and 7. Porunaṉ.)

The second stanza in Puṟam four hundred, extemporized by Murañciyūr Muṭinākaṉār associates a Cēra King Perun Cōṟṟutiyañ cēral with the Mahābhāratā war:

" Alaṅkuḷaippuravi aivaroṭu ciṉaii
nilan talaikkoṇṭa polam pūn tumpai
iraimpatiṉmarum porutu Kaḷattaviyap
peruñ cōṟṟu miku patam varaiyātu koṭuttōy."

"Oh, *the supplier of plenty of food* till all the two fifties (the Kauravas) having garlands made of gold flowers who had taken hold of the country (of the Pāṇḍavas) were attacked and killed in the battle field by the five (the Pāṇḍavas) in fury, who possessed horses with manes waving".

In Cilappatikāram, this munificent act of public service in the battle field connected with the Cēra King had also been extolled. This reminds us of the services of the Red Cross Society of the modern age.

During the Śaṅgam age there was a tendency to refer to poets contemporaneous or anterior to them and extoll them. As was related before, Puram 202 has recorded that Araiyam, a town, was lost resultant to the dishonour shown to the poet called Kaḷāttalaiyār.

Avvaiyār has referred to Kapilar and Veḷḷivītiyār. Kapilar was characterized by Nappasalaisār, a lady poet, as 'Pulaṉaḻukkaṟṟa antaṇāḷaṉ' - an antaṇaṉ devoid of impurities of the five senses; by Peruṅkuṉṟūr Kiḻās as 'Kavalaiyil neñcil Kapilaṉ' - Kapilaṉ without any anxiety at heart; and by Poruntil Iḷaṅkīraṉār as 'Veṟutta kēḷvi viḷaṅku pukaḻkkapilaṉ' - Kapilan with extensive knowledge and well known fame.

Indeed some of these bards or poets were immersed in poverty and they had to depend upon the munificence of the chieftains.

Once Peruñ cittiraṉār obtained a large gift from kumaṇaṉ and gave it to his wife with some instructions which have been recorded in Puṟam 163 :-

"Oh, the house wife! Divide the bounty to all those who entertain devoted affection for you and with whom you have a strong feeling of affection; to the elderly dames who are adorned with chastity; to those who helped you on condition that what you got should be returned; you need not consult me; don't keep anything with you thinking they would be of use to you in times of need". Such an advice to his wife was not meant to her only but for the society at large.

'Yātumūrē yāvarum kēḷir' is a pithy saying that leads to national integrity. This means "Any place is ours and everyone our kith and kin". This statement of a good old poet Kaṇiyaṉ Pūṅkuṉṟaṉ is apt to continue to be fresh through the ages.

The well known utterance of a Saint Poet Paṭṭiṉattār of the 10th century A.D. is "uḷaippiṉ vārā uṟutikaḷuḷavō". This can be justly parapharased by "There is no substitute for hard work" which is now being propagated in the nook and corner of the Bharath.

" Celvam eṉpatu cintaiyiṉ niṟaivē
Alkā nalkuravu avā eṉappaṭumē"–
" Which is wealth – it is contentment;
Which is penury – it is avarice."

This was the adage of a popular Saint poet Kumaraguruparar of the 17th century. All these are appropriate sayings capable of moulding the character of the society whichever it may be.

Netuñceḻiyaṉ was a king-poet of the Saṅgam age: His verse (Puṟam, No. 183) – in the form of a royal Edict – is a public proclamation to his subjects on the importance and necessity of education to all those under his regnancy.

In Veṟṟivēṟkai of Ativīrarāma pāṇṭiyaṉ, a chieftain of the Pandiya clan under the supremacy of the Vijayanagar kings, we find the same kind of information on education:

'Kaṟkai naṉṟē kaṟkainaṉṟē;
Aṟivuṭai oruvaṉai aracaṉum virumpum.'
–'Even the king would like the erudite one'

Coming to the days of the four Saiva Saints and Āḻwārs who were Saint-poets propagating the Bhakti cult, we find that their improvisations viz. Dēvāram and prabandams gave solace to the society which was perturbed on the one side by those who propagated alien religion and on the other by the incessant invasions from outside and the scuffles within.

Several rock-cut temples came into existence under the authority of the Pallavas and it is said that they were constructed in order to fulfil the desire of the society.

Appar and Sampantar were dynamic personalities and what they preached, the society began to accept and follow.

Tirumūlar taught in his Tirumantiram not only moral codes to common men but also to those with philosophic turn of mind.

Theophilanthropism – love of both god and man–was the dictum of those days. Recital of Dēvāram had also come into vogue.

During the days of Kampar the story of Rāmā was very popular in the society and Kampar would say that he wrote the Kāvya because he or I may say with confidence the whole Tamiḷakam - loved the story of Rāmā.

Ottakkūttar was the poet–Laureate and he has recorded in his three sublime poetic pieces well known as Mūvarulā in that part called Rājaparampariyam many anecdotes pertaining to the Cōḷa sovereigns.

During the Cōla period we find regular epigraphical records the text of which were composed in blank verse or Āsiriyam metre, widely known as *meykkīrtti,* wherein we find a narration of the activities of kings. But for them we would not have been in a position to know the history of the kings, their geneology, their activities and so on.

A land mark in the history of Saivism is the composition of Periyapurāṇam by Sēkkiḷār. He was the minister of Kulottunga II and a great Saivite poet.

Prof. K. A. Nīlakaṇṭa Sāstri has rightly observed that the Periyapurāṇam has influenced the lives and thoughts of the Tamil Saivite population almost incessantly from the date of its composition. How it has influenced the society will be known from the following instances :—

Guhais or monasteries were established commemorating the Dēvāram trio and the 'Tiruttoṇtattokai' which formed the basis for Periyapurāṇam.

A guhai was named 'Kāḷikkaṟpakam kukai'. 'Kāḷikkaṟpakam' denotes Tiruñānasampantar and this compound is found in one of Sampantar's Dēvāram. A piece of land was also called 'Srīyāḷi kkaṟpakam' during Raja Raja I.

A Tiruvarur Inscription says that the mother of Āḷutaiya nampi (Suntarar) was Isaiñāniyār who was the daughter of Ñāna civācāriyār.

A village at the vicinity of Tiruvennai nallur was called 'Ariyavāṉa valakku veṉṟa perumāḷ nallūr.'

A *ekkāḷam* - trumpet was named 'piccaṉeṉṟu pāṭacconnāṉ' during the time of Kōpperuñciṅkaṉ.

'Poṉṉārmēṉi' was the beginning a patikam of Suntarar at Tirumaḷapāḍi. A street was called 'Poṉṉār mēṉi vilākam'.

Lord Siva bade Suntarar to proceed by saying 'uḷōm pōkīr' and this has become the name of a village near Tiruveṇpākkam.

'Tiruviraiyākkali' is a term denoting a royal order. This was used by Kōṭpulināyaṉār. This was given as a name to a street.

In the Tiru āṉaikkā inscriptions we find many Dēvāram hemistichs occuring as the name of men or places. 'Cilantiyaic cōḷaṉākkiṉāṉ tiruttōppu' is one.

Kaṇṇappar was apotheosized ie., he was exalted to the rank of god. This was sung by Appar in Tiruccāykkāṭu in the hemistich 'Tavapperun tēvu ceytār.' This is found in an epigraph at Tirukkālatti.

'Nañcamutākkiṉāṉ, Nallanamamuṭaiyāṉ' are names that remind us the miracles of Appar.

'Kākku nāyakaṉ' is the name of a mutt and 'Karuvuḷnāyakaṉ' is the surname of a chieftain who lived during the time of Kulot tunga I and a well known poet called 'Neṟkuṉṟam kiḷār', being the author of a minor poem entitled 'Tiruppukalūr Antāti'. These two compounds are found in the Dēvāram of Appar.

Saiva Samaya Santāṉa Achāryas were the authors of Saiva Siddhanta Sastras and their service to society was the propagation of Saiva Siddhanta system of Philosophy.

Later on for a few centuries poets were engaged in composing minor poems which attracted the middle class men and many ballads also came to be written for the sake of the commonalty mostly in colloquial form of speech.

It may be noted that most of the Kshētras or shrines were celebrated in stray stanzas. It also came into practice to list the shrines in patikams called 'Kshētrakkōvai.' Many shrines had been

sung by the Dēvāram Trio. People were perchance not satisfied with one stanza or one or few decads dedicated in praise of their town or shrine. They probably wanted to exalt the position of their kshētra in the eyes of their countrymen. Hence many kshetras got minor poems sung on them as 'antāti, vulā, kalampakam' etc. Not content with this they caused to write Purāṇas on a host of kshētras in Tamiḷakam.

The Moslem and Christian poets followed the footsteps of their Hindu brothren and composed puranas, minor poems etc. pertaining to their faith which, in all probability, would have satisfied the literary needs of that section of society in Tamil Nādu.

Modern period is almost devoid of the old trend. A new wave has set in. Modern poetry is to a large extent destitute of religious ideas or philosophy. Puritanism in language and diction has come into vogue. Writing in accepted grammatically controlled metres are not favoured but compositions in blank verse are welcomed.

As some one put it, the poems of the so called poets need not be scanned by the author but they could be easily scanned by the compositor in the press as he liked it. Such a verse has been named '*vacana kavitai*'.

Bharati's songs induced National spirit in the Society and most of Bharaṭi Dasan's songs have been penned to propagate social reform.

There are nowadays a class of poets exclusively for children, their language being very simple and attractive to them.

Many budding poets are coming up and '*kaviyaraṅkam*' (poets' meet) to exhibit their skill in writing and exposition of verses before a large and elite audience is becoming very popular. Their poetry is indeed couched in simple language so that anyone can understand while hearing them.

So far we have seen that the poets were held in high esteem; they held high posts; some were engaged in various occupation;

they served as envoys and peace makers; they recorded historical events in their poetical treatises; their services through epigraphy is worthy of praise; their pithy sayings are yet refreshing; and the modern trend is mostly devoid of the old way but suited to the modern way of thinking of the society.

Thiru M. Arunachalam: Thiru K. M. Venkataramiah has read a very interesting paper on the role played by the Poets of the Sangham age on contemporary society at the higher levels. I would like to add a few more points and instances to his paper.

The author of *Tirukkural* was not a person of mean birth as clearly pointed out by the speaker. This idea is also found echoed in a verse *Tiruvalluvamalai* (verse 8). "The author of *Kural* is like an angel, who has given us with deep insight the fruits about the four goals of life-virtue, wealth, happiness and liberation. A fool would say that he was a *valluva* (one of mean birth) but wise people will not listen to his words".

Poets have indeed played an effective role as peace makers among warring chiefs. The words of Kovur-kilar addressed to the two Chō̤la brothers Killi the Good and Killi the Tall when they were engaged in a battle along with their forces is a well known instance. They stopped fighting and became friends (*Purananuru* verse 45). Another instance is the famous story of Poihaiyar who sang a long poem of 40 verses known as *Kalavali Narpadu* on the battle of Kalumalam in which the Chō̤la monarch Koc-chengat Chō̤la defeated and took prisoner the Sēra ruler, Kanaikkal Irumporai. The poet sang this poem and secured the release of his friend the Sēra ruler.

Another important role of the poet has been his part in portraying the woeful conditions of life in various levels and thereby causing enactments on the law of the land. The role of Charles Dickens in Britain is well known. His novels like David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist, Martin Chuzzlewitt, Dombey and Son etc. had caused the British laws under Education, Labour, Factories, Prisons, Court of wards, etc. to be amended. Probably the solitary instance of a similar nature in

the Tamil language is the case of Desikavinayakam Pillai who wrote a powerful satire on the woes of the joint matriarchal families under the *marumakkattayam* law in South Travancore. He published the poem in the pages of a journal there, giving the impression that it was an old work, copied from an ancient manuscript. He had pictured life so piteously that people were made to think about it and in time an amendment to the law was passed there which helped to mitigate at least some of the hard conditions. The poem was called *'the Marumakkalvali manmiyam'* !

The rescue of the image of Lord Muruha from the sea by the great royal Chief Vadamalaiyappan has been sung in the form of a *kirttana* by the poet Veimalai Kavirayar and this throws considerable light and gives valuable historical data on a contemporary occurrence. An instance of even greater importance to society is the role of Sivagrayogi in the 16th century when Sevappa Nayak was ruling Tanjavur. The *advaita* brahmin *sanyasis* of the day were jealous of the growing popularity of the Saiva Velala mutts and their acharyas and they went about condemning them saying that the Velalas (for the matter of that, none except the brahmins) were not competent to wear the saffron robe, to become acharyas, to establish mutts, to have disciples and propagate their own religious doctrines. That was a period when the Saiva mutts such as those at Tiru Avaduturai, Kanchi, Dharmapuram, Suryanarkoil and Tulavur were slowly coming up and expanding. The brahmin attitude greatly annoyed these people and they referred the matter to Sevappa Nayak, the sympathetic ruler of the land. He happened to be an ardent devotee of Sivagra yogi, a brahmin Sanyasi, Head of the Suryanarkoil Saiva mutt. Yogi was an enlightened soul, who believed in devotion to God and not in the caste system. He collected profuse authorities from the Saivagamas and proved to the Nayak that the Velalas (non-brahmins) were equally qualified to be acharyas and found Mutts, as the brahmins themselves. He brought out a manual in this respect, called the *Saiva Sanyasa Paddhati*. It was printed in 1929. This settled the question once for all and from his day the Saivas have been having the same

rights in all religious matters as the advaita vedanta brahmins, thanks to the good offices of the poet-saint Śivagra yogi.

Regarding the feeling of oneness or the attitude of integration, we may here remember the life of Sri. Kumaragurupara Swami (middle of the 17th century) who went to Banaras from the extreme south of India, learnt the Hindustani language, preached his own religion, Saiva Siddhanta, and established a monastery in Banaras on the banks of the Ganges, which is stil flourishing. He has always sung of this oneness as his song, *Kalambakam* on Kasi (Banaras) will indicate; "All the different rivers which we see are the Ganga. All the shrines, Kasi; all the deities enshrined there are Visvanatha". Besides, the poets have also given useful constructive advice to the rulers as we see in Kudapulaviyanar in advising the Pandiya ruler. The Pāṇḍiya country is mostly rain fed. Hence his advice to the Pāṇḍiyan Neduncheḻiyan is that he should construct a number of dams and tanks to stop the rain water flowing into the sea and thereby help in the production of food, which at once will help all the efforts of the King including war.

Prof. Khan referred to the capture of Madurai and the Pāṇḍiya country by the Muslim forces under Malik Kaffoor. Although there was political opposition to this invasion, poets do not appear to have reacted to this in their writings. But when Kumāra Kampanna marched on Madurai and drove out the muslim usurpers, his wife Ganga Devi wrote a small *kāvya* on the event in Sanskrit known as *Madurā Vijayam* in about 600 verses. When the Sri Rangam temple was sacked, many Vaishnava acharyas fled from there, some carrying the temple images with them. Some of these incidents are narrated in the *Guruparamparai* and the *Kōyiloḻuhu* of Sri Rangam. They only narrate the events but do not speak about any opposition or revolt in poetic form.

Thiru P. Thirugnanasambandhan: Kanchipuram was a well known centre of higher learning in ancient India. Aspirants for higher learning from different parts of India were drawn to this centre. The renowned philosophers like Dharmapāla, Dharmakīrti

and Dignāga who hailed from Kanchi carved a name for themselves in the Nalanda monastery. Buddhaghoṣa, a poet and author of Padya Cūḍāmaṇi, a poem on the life of Buddha hails from Tamil Nad.

Daṇḍin is the celebrated author of Kavyādarśa, an early Rhetorical work in Sanskrit and Dasakumāracarita, the tale of ten princes. He is considered to have lived in the court of the Pallava King Narasimha Varman in the 7th century A.D. In the introduction to Avantisundarīkatha another work of Daṇḍin, it is narrated that he went to Mahāmallapuram and worshipped Trivikrama in the temple on the seashore and got the inspiration for writing this famous tale. He is supposed to be well versed in śilpaśāstra also. It is narrated that he was requested to inspect the idol of Trivikrama in the temple which he did and appreciated the work of the artist.

Mahēndravikramavarman I (600-625 A.D.) was the author of Mattavilāsa prahasanam and Bhagavadajjukīyam; the former is a farce in which we find reference to decadence of religion. It describes the drunken revelry of a kāpālika with his female companion, his quarrel with a hypocritical śākya bhikṣu over the theft of a bowl, the mediation by a degenerate Pāśupata and the pranks of a madman. The latter again is a humorous play dealing with an ascetic Bhagavān and a courtesan Ajjukā.

Venkatamādhava, a contemporary of king Parantaka Chōḻa I (10th century) wrote a commentary on the Rig Vēda which is naturally read by Vedādhyāyins in different parts of India.

Nānārthārṇavasankshepa, a lexicographical work by Kesavasvāmin was written during the reign of Rāja Rāja Chōḻa II in the 12th century.

The Commentary on Vālmiki's Rāmāyana called 'Bhushana' was written by Govindaraja of the 16th century who hails from Kanchipuram. This work of great consequence' even today is widely read by people not only in Tamilnad but all over India.

Bālamanōrama, a simple and lucid commentary on Panini's Ashtadhyayi was written by Vasudēvadiksita who was patronised by the Tanjore court. This again is very popular among students and scholars of Sanskrit grammar particularly in South India. So is Rūpāvatāra of Dharmakīrti, another work on Sanskrit grammar which was very popular in the educational institutions founded by the Chōḷa kings earlier than the 12th century.

Raghunātha was the greatest of the Nayak kings of Tanjore. He was both a scholar and patron of letters like Bhōja of Dhara. His Sangītasudhā is a work on music including, instrumental music and dancing. Among his other works we have Acyutendrābhyudaya, Pārijātāharaṇa, Nalābhyudaya, Rāmāyaṇa-sārasangraha etc.

His minister was Govinda diksita. He was the prime minister of Chevvappa (1549-72), Acyuta (1577-1614) and Raghunatha (1614). Raghunatha and Govinda, king and minister respectively are described as 'mahīkshit' (ruler of earth) and 'dīkshit' (a brahmin who has undergone dikṣās). One was proficient in 'śastra (weapons) and the other in śāstra (sacred lore); one was an adept in 'āhava' (battle) and the other in 'hava' sacrifice). Govinda dīkṣita an authority on Dharmaśṣstra is well versed in the art of administration as well. In his poem 'Sāhityasudhā' he describes the history of his masters Acyuta and Raghunātha and is also credited with the authorship of Sangita sudhānidhi a work on music.

Yajnanārāyaṇa, son of Govinda diksita who was also patronised by king Raghunatha of the Tanjore Nayak dynasty commemorated the greatness of the Nayak family in his poems Sāhityaratnākara, and Raghunāthābhūpavijaya, and a play Raghunāthavilāsa.

Rājacūḍāmaāi dīkṣita was another poet patronised by king Raghunātha of Tanjore. He wrote besides other poems Raghunathabhūpavijaya celebrating the greatness of king Raghunātha.

Śrīdhara Venkatesa known as Ayyāvāl wrote Sahendravilāsa a poem which describes the exploits of his patron king Shahaji (1687-1711) who ruled at Tanjore. Triyambaka Makhin, a minister under the same Shahaji is the author of 'Dharmākutam' a unique Sanskrit work which interprets Rāmāyana in the light of code of virtues making frequent reference to Vēdas and Dharmaśāstras. He was in charge of the charitable endowments and as such his influence over his contemporary society must have been wholesome,

Ghanaśyāma, minister of king Tukhoji of Tanjore (1728-1735) is credited with 64 works in Sanskrit, 20 in Prakrit and 25 in other dialects. Among his works is poem that narrates āt once the story of Krishna, Hariscandra and Naḷa.

Cokkanātha who was patronised by king Shahaji describes the marriage of king Sahaji and Kantimati in his work Kantimatīparinaya.

Bhūminātha alias Nalla dīkṣita wrote Dharmavijayacampū which celebrates the life and history of king Shahaji. Sumatīndra Bhikṣu another poet in the court of Shahaji wrote a poem Sumatīndrajayaghoshaṇa eulogising his patron.

Venkatesa is the author of a Campu Bhosalavamśāvalī which describes the ancestors of king Sarabhoji and particularly the latter. Sarabharaja vilāsa of Jagannātha, a court poet of Sarabhoji, son of Ekoji again describes the glory of his patron.

Poet Rajanatha, a contemporary of king Acyutaraya of Vijayanagar (1520-1542) in his Acyutarāyābhyudaya deals mainly with Acyutaraya's expedition to the south to help restore the kingdom to the then Pāṇḍya ruler who had been driven away by the cēra king.

Appayya dīkṣita, the celebrated author of more than 100 works in the fields of poetry, poetics, philosophy and dialectics belongs to the 16th century. He lived at Vellore under the patronage of Chinna Bomma Bhupala. During the closing period of his life he visited the Pāṇḍya country at the invitation of Tirumala Nayaka to settle some sectarian disputes at Madurai.

Yajnasubrahmanya (1832–1879) was born at Ettaiyapuram. He was a poet in the court of Ettaiyapuram Samsthan and wrote a poem on the Imperial assemblage at Delhi in 1875 when the Prince of Wales visited the place.

A study of the above works of Sanskrit poets and others of this kind in Tamil Nadu after making due allowance for poetic exaggeration, may possibly reveal contemporary facets of political and social life of the kingdoms to which they relate.

Mahavidwan Pandit V. Natesanar: "I am not singling out Tamilnadu as the home of all culture but wish only to point out that it became a store-house of Indian Culture and Hindu religion more prominently perhaps than other states and from more ancient times. Poets, bards, minstrels, scops, balladsingers, troubadours, Jongleurs, Meistersingers, Trouveres, Minne-Singers, and other such kind abounded in Tamilnadu from the early days of civilisation. Their local names were Panan, Padini, Kuthar, Virali and Porunar. As they were hereditary in character they were well versed in folk lore; carried a fund of general and special knowledge on men and matters. The only 'learned' community in olden days was that of the Brahmins; next to them were these minstrels who were rich in practical wisdom. As the intermediary between the two kinds were the Tamil poets and bards of Tamil Nadu.

They were rich in the knowledge of Tamil language, literature and grammar and possessed full geographical knowledge of the land of their birth. Being wanderers they were respected both for their erudition and for their practical knowledge.

Tamil Nadu was from ancient times ruled over by three Aryan brothers, Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍiya. (*vide: My speech on "Tamil Kings, a Paradox" published by A.I.G.C.,* Ujjain). Since the learned gentry had no other avocation or industry in the field of knowledge they had necessarily to depend on the patronage of rich kings and chieftains. Since they formed the only rich source of entertainment both physical and intellectual they were beloved of the prince and peasant who held them in

high esteem, fed and clothed them and placed them on a higher rank and position than others giving them sufficient grants to live on peacefully with plenty. Many of them enjoyed the rarity of palace-life and when it was time for them to take leave of the patrons they were given a rich send off. The poets were the only people to cross any state boundry in the land. In short they were licensed citizens of Tamilagam because they were harmless in nature.

This was the general pattern of existence for the poets and their kind enumerated above. This way literature and language prospered and culture and civilisation advanced to great height. The result is the rich heritage of classic Tamil and puranic literature. If speaks volumes for the magnificent generosity and patronage of the Tamil Kings and rulers for literature, folk lore and the cultural arts. The Tamil Kings revered and respected Tamil poets and promoted their welfare, for they considered their lives more precious than the kings' lives.

These poets had the well being of the country at heart and very often risked their standing with the Kings in remonstrating with them, when they strayed from the righteous path. The poets are indispensable to cultural enjoyment and intellectual advancement of a country. The real founders of civilisation are poets and not politicians.

The Tamil civilisation endures odds while others remain as curious and exhibits. The enduring character of the Tamil goes to the credit of the ancient Tamil poets and scholars and savants who boldly and wisely held up the ideals of Tamil Culture and Customs. It is essential to know the make up of ancient Leaders of light and learning. Learning was not for earthly pleasures and it was not pursued to earn profits. Poets influenced the policy and politics of this land. A king was boasting how well he was ruling his vast country through the counsel of the learned poets and how well he treated his poets who were given equal treatment with him (Puṟam 71). It is interesting to note also that the Greek Alexander, the Great Emperor carried Homer's 'Iliad' about with him in a gold casket wherever he went. James

Wolfe, the Great General told his council on the eve of victory, that he would rather have written Gray's Elegy than capture Quebec.

Nedunchezhian, the Great Pāṇḍiya and Poet-King invoked a curse on himself. He said before defeating his opponents "If I fail in this war let me be cursed and the poets go away from my kingdom and the Chief poet, Mangudi Maruthan may not sing about me, (puṛam 72).

The Tamil poets were treated as demigods by the Prince and the Peasant. They were poet Laureates by virtue. Poet Laureate means a person Crowned or decked with laurel leaves as a mark of honour; he is a member of the Royal household (vide: Vol. 14 pp. 527-The World Book Encyclopedia)

Paranar was the poet Laureate of King Pegan. One day the King was not at home. His Queen, Kannagi was crying for the King's separation and for his remaining day and night in a dancing girl's house and enjoying low mundane pleasures forgetting his wedded wife at house. Paranar took pity on the Queen and so he went to represent the Queen's pitiable plight to the King. He met the king and pleaded for his return journey to his wife at home. The King heard the poet and returned home to please his Queen Kannagi.

Poet Kappianar explained to the Chēra King, Kalangai Kanni that the King lives for the people and not for his own welfare. The kingly qualities of mercy even to his foes, helping and honouring the patriotic and loyal subjects, acquirement of wisdom, conquering the five senses, ruling justly and with humility, showing heroism in the War and routing the foe; he should save the oppressed and depressed people from tyrants (Pathupattu 37).

Poet Pasungudayar said to the King Elanchat chenni that the noble qualities of a king lie in his shrewdness in understanding the true and loyal citizens and turning a deaf ear to idle-tale-bearers and sneekers, meteing out punishment justly and showing mercy to the repentant (Puṛam 10).

Poet Iḷanaganar told the King Nanmaran that the King's righteous administration is the true strength of his great kingdom. Though the four fold armies make a Kingdom great its true strength lies in justice, in meriting the virtue in others and to keep the needy in the state free from want. (Puṛam 55).

Poet Pisir Anthayar advised the Pāṇḍya King, Arivudai Nambi as to how he should collect tax from his subjects. He stressed that indiscriminate taxation and expenditure would ruin his subjects and Kingdom even as the depradation of an elephant in a paddy field would result in waste and spoil and not in quenching the thirst and appeasing the hunger of the animal. If the King taxes the poor exorbitantly it would result in destruction of the land and Government, neither he could have his treasury fill nor the world could thrive (Puṛam 184).

Poet Mosikiranar sent a note to all the Kings of Tamil Nadu and impressed on them that the prosperity of a land depends upon just and efficient administration. Neither paddy nor water is the life. It is the king who is the soul of the far-flung earth. (Vide: Puṛam 186).

Dr. Mrs. V. Balambal: The poets of ancient Tamil country were well patronised by the Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya monarchs. Though the Saṅgam was established in the Pāṇḍya country, most of the poets did not stick to the Pāṇḍyas alone. They were in the habit of visiting the courts of not only the three above mentioned rulers, but also that of the chieftains all over the Tamil country. They were given high status and honour by the Saṅgam rulers. They were sometimes the advisers of the kings and chieftains and interfered in the political affairs also. They were given the privilege of visiting the warcamps and battle-fields too. The rulers had given strict orders to their soldiers to allow the poets to their palaces and courts at any time. Puṛanānūṛu and other Saṅgam literary works give many instances to prove the high freedom of speech enjoyed by the Saṅgam poets.

Karikāla, a famous saṅgam chola ruler defeated the Chēra and Pāṇḍya rulers and eleven chieftains at the battlefield of Venni. The Chēra ruler Pērunjēralātan had a wound at his back and as he took it as an insult he decided to commit suicide by following the practice of Vadakkiruttal (வடக்கிருத்தல்), Vennikuyattiyar, who was a court poetess of Karikāla met him in his camp and told him boldly that she would not praise Karikāla eventhough he won the battle but on the other hand, she would praise the act of Pērunjēralātan only. She praised the Chēra ruler as nobler than Karikāla. Karikāla was not angry with the poetess for her frank talk.

Kōvurkiḻār was a renowned poet of the sangam age. The Chōḻa rulers Naḷangiḷḷi and Nedungiḷḷi were not on good terms and there was constant warfare between them. Once Naḷangiḷḷi besieged Nedungiḷḷi's fort at Uṛaiyūr. A poet named Iḻandatan entered the Uṛaiyūr fort to get some gifts from Nedungiḷḷi. But Nedungiḷḷi mistook him as a spy of Naḷangiḷḷi and ordered his men to put an end to the life of Iḷandattan. On hearing this order, Kōvurkiḻār rushed to Uṛaiyūr and told Nedungiḷḷi: "Poets fly like birds and traverse many a long and arid routes in search of patrons and with untutored tongue, sing their praise; pleased with what they get, they feast their companions, eat without saving, give without stinting and pine only for honour. Such is their living which depends on the free gifts of patrons. Does this ever hurt others? No, to be sure. Only they exult in their triumphs over rival bards and when their rival's faces are cast down, then they walk proudly and are well pleased, they have thus a primacy of their own, not less than persons who like you, have attained to the rulership of the earth." (Puṛa-nanuru: 47). After listening to this appeal of Kōvurkiḻār, Nedungiḷḷi released Iḷandattan. The courageous attitude of Kōvurkiḻār resulted in the release of a poor poet.

He did not fail to appeal to Naḷangiḷḷi too. When Naḷan-giḷḷi laid a siege to the Uṛaiyūr fort, Kōvurkiḻār wanted to stop the warfare between the two Chōḻa rulers. So he boldly told Naḷangiḷḷi that both of them (Naḷangiḷḷi and Nedungiḷḷi were)

Chōḻas. Both of them wore *aatti* garlands. They were not fighting with the Chēras or Pāṇḍyas or any other chieftain. If either of them lost the battle, it was the Chōḻa who lost the battle. His action would bring no honour to his race. This conflict between the two Chōḻa rulers would be well rejoiced by other kings. Hence Naḻangiḷḷi must lift his siege and retreat: (Puṟanāṉūṟu, 45). Naḻangiḷḷi realised the truth in his statement and thus a civil war was averted by the bold interference of Kōvurkiḻār.

Nedungiḷḷi was not as brave as Naḻangiḷḷi. His Āvūr fort was also besieged by Naḻangiḷḷi. Nedungiḷḷi was unable to face his enemy's forces. So he shut himself in the fort itself. But the people of Āvūr suffered greatly. The children, ladies and men suffered due to lack of milk, food, flower and water. Knowing the sufferings of the people of Āvūr, Kōvurkiḻār met Nedungiḷḷi in the fort and told him that he should either come out of the fort and fight with Naangiḷḷi like e true hero or surrender to him like a coward. It was not fair on his part to make his subjects suffer due to the siege (Puṟanāṉūṟu: 44). Nedungiḷḷi felt ashamed of his act and so opened the gates of his fort. By his courageous appeal, Kōvurkiḻār put an end to the sufferings of the people of Āvūr.

Kiḷḷivaḷavan, another Chōḻa ruler defeated Malayamān Tirumudikāri and imprisoned two of his sons and sentenced them to death. On hearing this Kōvurkiḻār reached the place where two little sons of Kāri were about to be stamped by the royal elephant. The poet appealed to Kiḷḷivaḷavan saying that his ancestors were very kind even to a dove and a cow. Why should he now behave in such a way to mar his name? (Puṟanāṉūṟu: 46). On realising his mistake, Kiḷḷivaḷavan released the two sons of Kāri. Thus Kōvurkiḻār prevented the execution of innocent children by his timely appeal to the Chōḻa ruler.

Kōpperunchōḻa was opposed by his own sons. Pullanur Eyirriyanar, a poet of the time, appealed to the parental emotion of the Chōḻa ruler and thus a civil war was averted. (uṟanāṉūṟu: 213).

Koccenganan̲, another Chola ruler defeated the Chera ruler Karaikkal Irumporai and imprisoned him at Kudavayirkhottam. Poet Poygaiyar, a friend of the Chēra ruler wrote Kaḷavaḷi 40 on Koccenganan and got the release of Kāraikkal Irumporai.

These are a few instances to show the high freedom of speech enjoyed by the Sañgam poets who interfered in the state affairs and boldy expressed their views and helped the rulers to impart justice in the proper manner.

Thiru Sourindra Kumar Khan: The present Seminar on the "Role of Poets in Tamil Nadu in the Society through the Ages" might as well open the prospect of a new outlook on poetry in India one of the matters so direly needed to improve and consolidate our cultures both traditional and acquired from extraneous sources.

It may sound like a truism to say that Tamil Poetry must also be Indian poetry, that is to say, be relished and enjoyed by most non-Tamilians of India when translated into other Indian languages of the country. To say so much is almost to look to the essence as well as essentials of real poetry. And this leads us to recall the valuation of true poetry as inevitable by Mathew Arnold (admittedly a distinguished critic of modern English literature). Inevitability which is more eloquent than spontaneity, is the unfailing character of true poetry as distinguished from verses which even with occasional verve are more evidences of craftmanship, not being the inevitable product of inspiration of a man of gifts.

Taking for a clearer conception of the involved issues, the case of Bengal, where in modern times more poetry has been written than perhaps in the rest of India taken together, three fourth of this vast poetry may be buried for good without occasioning any sense of loss or harm to the Bengalis! At any rate half of this poetry is either odious or revolting for the simple reason of being not only not-inevitable at all but even as craftmanship these are of a very poor semblance, often hackneyed as well as sterile. Indeed, these are worse than artificial there being no pulse not to speak of life (vigour).

At this stage it may be noted that of the best of Bengali poets of this century only two stand out pre-eminently as real poets the rest being versifiers. These two poets are Tagore and Nazrul Islam, one is the landowner in the fourth generation, the other is from the stock of real cultivators, one is a Hindu (Brahmin) the other is a Muslim of the common stock, one is a singer of peace and quiet (albeit all his pleadings to God for reform, change etc.), the other is a singer of war, rebellion, retaliation, violence etc, having heard the rumblings of the submerged sorrows and agonies of the people. Yet both are great poets, although of varying proportions, and both wrote inevitably.

Quite conceivably, against these two stalwarts the rest pale into insignificance though one or two of them on occasions emit sparks to demonstrate life. Yet that life may be written off as dead.

But why and in which aspects are these two poets great? One has re-introduced in majestic poems the Indo-Aryan and Buddhist cultures and attitudes with full and total admiration and even rapturous adulation for both, a service which was the most desparately needed for the spiritually and culturally dying Bengalis and perhaps also Indians, after nearly a thousand years of alien domination, both politically and ethically, (the latter by vitiation and perversion).

Tagore was born and brought up in that tiny spot of earth known as Gangetic Bengal[1] and its culture was his most pronounced, if not the only, source of inspiration.

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1. Those interested and curious in acquirng an idea of Gangetic Bengal may read the book, "*The heart of Aryavarta*" by Lord Renaldshay some time Governor of Bengal. Its centre of culture and intellectual activity from the remote past was Navadwip, the only one of its kind in the whole of north-eastern India, Navadwip was one of the four centres of Buddhist culture the other three being Taxila, Banaras, and Mithila which all after the rise of the Gupta rulers were also functioning as centres of Sanskrit culture. Since the decline of Buddhism in India these ancient places have become centres of only Sanskrit culture.

A degenerated people (as we Indians all are) can the more easily regenerate if it has an admirble past provided that this past is re-presented and re-told elequently which Tagore succeeded in doing in his own way. Whether Bengal or India has re-generated or not after a thousand years of clouded and tarnished living under utterly alien administrations with their utterly darkening or confusing cultural impositions, is a different matter and not within the scope of our discussion here. Naturally, Tagore's scholarly and Sanskritised poems were not fully for the common people most of whom had been de-Aryanised and de-Buddhisted in course of the thousand years referred to. He tried to pull out the submerged glamour and glory of ancient India which we had almost forgotten, and thereby helped in the respectful revival of our tradition and culture. (Gandhi came to complete it politically.)

But there was also Nazrul Islam, the next best. He was born and brought up considerably away from the Gangetic Bengal. He knew, though a Muslim, a bit of the old Indian classics, even of the idolatrous aspects of Hinduism, but these failed to work on him in the form they did on Tagore whose ancestral association with the river Ganges with all its magnetic mysteries and appeals made him what he was as a poet. Nevertheless, Nazrul was a rebel and openly and defiantly preached in immortal heroic poems rebellion, plunder, violence including breaking of jails imagining the whole of India as a prison. He called everyone to be a hero and to hold his head high in a manner the sight of which would even put to shame the all high Himalayas! Through him spoke not only the real youth of Bengal, but its very soul, its plants and trees, its flowers, birds, rivers, hills all and they came out as it were not only to mourn and complain of their sorrows, agonies, troubles and the like, but also to demand redressal.

So these were Bengal's poets, to be distinguished from more versifiers who are eager and prepared to spin out a sonnet or a

8184

lyric on any passing matter without any effectiveness and contact of the foundations of the country and her people.[2]

Just to have a glimpse of our history: After the fall of India to the Muslims, what India lost or stood to loose gradually has not been measured and can scarcely be measured now. But no one can consciencioustly and with decency of taste deny that India lost immensely in every respect and aspect of life and perhaps gained nothing instead towards compensation or even consolation. The few architectural structures that we *pretend* to witness with admiration in cities like Agra and Delhi (and also certain others) do not in the least help us to feel compensated for the losses sustained, not to speak of being consoled. Architecture apart there was of course a little literary and cultural activity, but these also failed miserably to inspire any attitude of satisfaction let alone admiration or even appreciation. The alien rulers whether Muslim or British, in their conduct of public administration and political activities, never could encourage any real hope of happiness among the people and on the other hand most often the people felt terrorised or humiliated, from the one because of its astounding ruthlessness (especially when compared

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2. The only other great poet of modern Bengal is Michael Madhusudan Dutt of 19th century who is also apparently the only epic poet of modern India. It may be of considerable interest to the residents of this city that Michael Dutt lived here in the Santhome area for a length of time. In those days he was composing poems in English and one of his more known English poem is '*Captive Lady*'. About this time one of his English friends suggested to him to compose poems in his mother tongue pointing out that as England was very rich in great poets his poems in English would not count. Michael took this advice eagerly, learnt Sanskrit thoroughly to study the great epics and classics and then composed his masterly epic poem, "*Meghnad badh kavya*" on the tragic death of Meghnad, the eldest son of King Rāvaṇa of Lanka, in the hands of Lakshmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma. Michael seems to be also the first Bengali poet (and may be the first Indian poet) to compose sonnets.

He knew well seven languages including English, French, Latin, Greek and possibly also Hebrew. He married a French lady and for a time lived in France.

against the sympathetic and compassionate Buddhist rulers and rulers impressed by Buddhist and Indo Aryan thoughts), the other by its brutalised and callous exploitation clinching the mass of the people to a corner where they were left with only two activities, to starve and to pray to God for relief! Hunger, disease and destitution were the order of the day and for centuries, more during the British rule.

And to leave for us picturesque images and imageries of these haggard experiences of the people we needed poets and perhaps only poets. How many of our poets or for that matter Tamil poets have left us any inspired or inevitable spiritualised pictures of the peoples' experiences of those days?

And it is on the strength and degree of these or such poetic pictures that we should estimate and evaluate our poets of yesterday. Of course, not only poets but also saints and in fortunate countries even prophets (as for instance, the advent of Jesus in Israel) leave to posterity images and potraits of the agonies and sorrows of the people. But we are to be concerned here only for poets whom we are ready to extol. India had no prophet after the Buddha. Even Sankarāchārya cannot be accepted as one with the proportions of a prophet. But let us not forget that in the medieval India, north as well as south, there were a good many saints whose teachings unmistakably expose how absurd and impossible it was for the people to feel even consoled or complacent, let alone happy. Moreover, these saints came mostly from the lower stratas of the people, lower both economically and intellectually and none of them could command a superior personality. And in their stagnation and frustration they tried to find solace in love of God and prescribe alike and for a compromise with the adverse circumstances instead of resorting to rebellion, hoping that God would someday help them to tide over their difficulties. Yet, in all these many centuries God has not so helped the people of India as to feel happy and in an atmosphere of welfare.

We have noted that these saints wanted the people to compromise and to tolerate with patience, nothing more. They

did not or perhaps dared not advise them to revolt and to go into ruptures of rebellious experiences. That was indeed the task not of saints but of poets, true and pristine poets par-excellence. (In modern times it has become also sometimes the task of intellectuals as we have seen in the 18th century France where the intellectuals worked towards the French Revolution of 1789).

Have we in Tamil Nadu any such poet? If there were such poets, they should be extolled to inspire the modern Tamilians towards a re-orientation of their traditions and consolidation of their cultures with those of the country, so as to remind and recreate the India that was before she fell to the might of the Muslim sword. If there was none let us the modern Tamilians be quiet and penitent and be not much eloquent about our poets of these days and think how we can recreate and revitalise our past both traditionally and culturally, in the light of our findings from history and of the modern scientific and technological age. Such things cannot be made to order, they emanate from the heart of true poets and also thinkers (philosophers).

Let us now close this discourse with one or two concrete historical episodes so that the people can feel how and in what manner they have to proceed to bring into reality a new poetry (as well as literature) agreeably to the tune of true democracy which we have cherished in the constitution.

We may recall the aggressions of Malik Kafur, (14th century) the distinguished and gifted general of Alauddin Khalji, who ravaged the entire southern peninsula in his campaigns of conquest for political ends, but it was in point of fact political brigandage and plunder of all the people of the classes and the masses. For, Malik Kafur, according to historians, took away more than ninety thousand maunds of gold and silver as his booty from the south. The quantity is so huge and as booty perhaps unequalled in the history of mankind, that his greed must have pierced or penetrated also into homes of ordinary citizens to completely denude the zone and even to impoverish it so as to prevent it from raising its head again. Needless to say that Malik Kafur's prolonged, ruthless and merciless campaigns agonised and

terrorised the southern people to a degree which cannot be conceived now. Has any Tamil or Telugu poet left any picture of the devastation Malik Kafur wrought or of the agonies of the terror striken people of those days? Indeed, it is not too much to expect it from the 14th century poets of a language which was glorified by its poets in as far back as the 2nd century (Sangam age). If any such poet is there he is the poet of the south and he may be extolled and worshipped even. (For, a poem even on flood or famine or drought or earthquake is not enough help.) If there was none we have to admit the poverty of our past poetic talent and begin anew.

We may also take almost a similar view about the long campaign of a quarter of a century waged by emperor Aurangzeb (17th–18th centuries) in his bid to conquer the Deccan to complete and fulfil the Moghul ambition of conquering the whole of India in their imperialistic design, And if Aurangzeb was a capable emperor he was not always so from the standpoint of non-Muslims though he was less fanatic than Alauddin, the master of Malik Kafur. We need not forget or ignore that all those many long years Aurangzeb carried on the campaign he depended almost entirely on the ruthless exploitation of the resources and the people of the south, especially the zones now covered by Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to maintain tip-top his huge military machine of not only lakhs of men but also of thousands of horses and elephants. No one can deny that all these years the people of the south suffered from untold and unprecedented pressures of exploitation leading to agonise and to terrorise them. Has any Tamil or Telugu poet left any picture of the experiences and sufferings of the people of those days?

It was Count Leo Tolstoy who defined Art as "an activity by means of which one man having experienced a feeling intentionally transmits it to others", and George Barnard Shaw took it as "the voice of the master". If any Tamil or Telugu poet had experienced the real feeling of the people about the ravages and plunders of Malik Kafur and the economic exploitation of Aurangzeb and sundry other exploitive and oppressive activities of

his army including violation of chastity and kidnapping of women, he would have intentionally transmitted his experiences in magnificent poems to posterity.

Lest we be suspected or accused of entertaining any ill-will against the absolutist administration and ways of the Muslim rulers, we may recall that the administration of Bengal (as the province was then with the prepartition Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and even portions of Assam and perhaps also of Uttar Pradesh) by the two earliest British rulers Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, were in no way better and in a certain concrete aspect worse than that of even the Afghans not to speak of the Moghuls. For, they not only plundered tonnes of wealth and mints of money but also carried away ship-loads of them to England to provide the finances for the Industrial Revolution there as some of the English scholars themselves have admitted. And it is these plunders which has impoverished Bengal for ever.

It is a standing shame and sign of stigma and of unmistakable worthlessness of the Bengalis that no poet was there to portray a single picture of those haggard days to inspire us. Of course, political actions were there nodoubt and in plenty, but these failed to deliver the goods.

The Chairman in his concluding remarks thanked the Leader for his interesting speech and the other speakers for taking part in the Seminar.